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THE RECENT VIOLENCE IN THE FRENCH SUBURBS¹ IS DIFFICULT TO INTEGRATE INTO THE GENERAL CLASS COMBAT

Summary of Events

The events which followed the accidental death of two young people in Clichy-sous-Bois² must not be underestimated. They have imposed themselves on both the dominant classes and on the proletariat as one of the principle subjects of discussion right now within each of their respective camps. That is why we must formalise some of our reflections on these facts³, all the more so today when the unrest is extinguished and the government seems satisfied. But first let's recall a few facts.

27 October: a banal incident between a group of youths and the police in Clichy-sous-Bois, in Seine-Saint-Denis, is transformed into a drama. Three lads retreated into an EDF compound. Two died from electric shock, the third was seriously injured. There followed a battle of interpretations. The police denied having caused the three accidents. Some youths close to the victims said that the deaths had been the product of a climate of fear instituted by the forces of repression in poor neighbourhoods. Rapidly, confrontations broke out between the assembled forces of repression and dozens, and then hundreds of young people. The night was hot, arrests multiplied, more police and CRS cooled down the anger of the youth of Clichy-sous-Bois. The area in the lower part of the town of Chêne-Pointu (10,000 habitants) was at the heart of the first wave of confrontations which lasted until 30 October. The families of the electrocuted youths appealed for calm. A silent march was held on the morning of Saturday 29 October. Religious and community representatives and the mayor himself each in their turn called for "dignity" and calm. Several hundred residents participated. Clashes quickly spread to the adjoining town of Montfermeil, with its Bosquets estate. The 400 cops arrested 22 youths. Starting on Sunday, 10 were brought in front of the Bobigny prosecutor to be examined. Eight of them were immediately brought to be sentenced on Monday 31st. Three were condemned to two months in prison.

1 *Translator's Note* – the translation of "banlieue" as "suburbs" is slightly problematic. The word "suburbs" in the English-speaking world tends to have a very respectable connotation – the suburbs are where the middle classes and the skilled workers live and the extreme concentrations of poverty are seen as being in the "inner cities". In France, social engineering through town-planning has gone a lot further than in most other industrialised countries and a large percentage of the working class in big cities live in super-sized suburban estates, rather like the "housing schemes" of Glasgow and Edinburgh. But "suburbs" will have to do...

2 Clichy-sous-Bois comprises 28,000 inhabitants. Around 30% of housing is social housing (HLM - habitation à loyer modéré). The town suffers a rate of unemployment of 25%, 50% for the population under 25. The middle classes and professionals represent only 4.7% of the inhabitants. A third of families are foreigners, originating from every continent, settled for a long time or recently arrived, political refugees or without papers. The municipality of Clichy-sous-Bois has a potential tax revenue which is only 40% of average towns of equivalent size. "*The town benefits from one of the most important programmes in France, endowed with 330 million E euros, for the destruction of 1600 collective housing units and 1900 reconstructions, in addition to the 4000 dwellings on the plateau of Hauts-de-Clichy and the Bosquets estate, where 17,000 people live. The mayor regrets that the neighbourhood of 10,000 inhabitants of Chêne-Pointu, in lower Clichy, where the first incidents took place on Thursday, was not accepted for the programme. Since 2002, the local police has been reduced from 35 officers to 15 on the plateau land, from 15 to 8 in lower Clichy*" (Le Monde, 5 November 2005)

3 The facts set out here are based on a hybrid of information received from the press and accounts collected by our own efforts.

On Sunday 30th, at 9 p.m., tear gas penetrated the mosque⁴ of Clichy-sous-Bois during new skirmishes. It was the end of Ramadan. The night of the 31st was even more agitated.

Clashes with the police happened in Aulnay-sous-Bois, Bondy, Tremblay-en-France and Neuilly-sur-Marne. In total some 68 vehicles were burnt in Seine-Saint-Denis in the course of that night. Trouble was also reported in Chelles (Seine-et-Marne), a town bordering Montfermeil, where seven cars were burned, according to the police, who had had stones thrown at them. Thirteen people, of the nineteen seized in Clichy-sous-Bois and Sevran-Beaudottes in the course of the night, were held for questioning on Tuesday for “*destruction of property*”, “*possession of incendiary substances*” or “*wilful violence*”, according to the police. The towns of Argenteuil and Sarcelles in the Val d'Oise also experienced incidents. For the city of Bobigny, the evening of Monday 31st did not see “*riots*” but “*harassing actions*” carried out by small groups of ten to fifteen attackers who threw stones at the forces of order in Sevran and Aulnay-sous-Bois, threw a Molotov cocktail in the direction of the CRS in Clichy, and burned the garage of the municipal police of Montfermeil. In the mean time, Nicolas Sarkozy, Minister of the Interior, increased his military-style declarations, promising to “*rid*” France of “*yobbos and scum*” by cleaning the suburbs “*with a pressure hose*”. The provocation was an instant success.

On Tuesday 1 November, the Prime Minister, Dominique de Villepin, got involved in the matter by receiving the families of the two dead adolescents, with Sarkozy. The next day it was the turn of the President of the Republic, Jacques Chirac, to add his tuppence worth: “*it is necessary to put people’s minds at rest. It is necessary that the law be applied firmly and in a spirit of dialogue and respect*”. And even: “*we must act while always basing ourselves on the principles which make up our Republic: everyone must respect the law; everyone must have a chance*”. He finished by delivering a more articulate message than that of “his” Minister of the Interior: “*We must go into immediate combined action even quicker on the terrain and development of dialogue.*” In conclusion, repression and integration, the two prongs of the Chiracian approach.

Following this the movement accelerated⁵, and on 2 November affected the whole Paris region and then extended itself to the provinces from 3 November. The paroxysm was achieved on the night of 6 November. After that incidents grew slowly up until 8 November to be extinguished in the Paris region on 15 November and in the provinces on 18 November.

A FIRST INVENTORY OF THE FACTS

On Monday 7 November a retired man of 61 died from his injuries after being attacked by a youth at the bottom of his building in Stains. However, according to his wife, his death was not strongly linked to the riots. Dozens of people, residents, police officers and firemen, were injured. Among the most seriously affected were a fireman whose face was burnt by Molotov cocktail and a disabled woman who was seriously burnt following an arson attack on a bus by some youths in Sevran on 2 November. A young man lost his hand while trying to throw a tear gas grenade back at the forces of order in Toulouse on 7 November. A policeman received second degree burns to his face following the explosion of a Molotov cocktail in a burning car. One cop was injured on the head and the shoulder by a pétanque ball⁶. Five foreign journalists from Korea, Russia and Italy were attacked and slightly wounded.

Twenty five *départements* (out of 96) were affected by the violence. Curfews were imposed in seven *départements* by the police chiefs, aiming at around forty municipalities in total. No decree of this type was made in the Paris region but the mayors of Raincy and Savigny-sur-Orge set up a curfew by municipal order, the same as in Belfort. Some curfews concerned unaccompanied minors, notably those set up by order of the chief of police in Amiens, Orléans, Lyon, Nice, Rouen, Le Havre and Mont-de-Marsan. In Evreux, all the inhabitants of the La Madeleine district were affected, whether adults or minors. Gatherings where there was a risk of disturbing public order were forbidden on Saturday 12 November in Paris and the next day in Lyon, because of the state of emergency.

Some 300 municipalities were affected by the violence, including numerous suburbs of Paris,

4 An old warehouse converted to a place of worship.

5 You can find a detailed account of the events on the site www.mouvement-communiste.com.

6 *Translator’s Note* – this sounds like a really good weapon!

principally in Seine-Saint-Denis. In the provinces the towns most involved were Evreux, Saint-Etienne, Toulouse, Lille and the Lyon conglomeration. Also affected in the south, but to a lesser extent, were: Nice, Marseille, Nîmes, Carpentras, Montpellier, Perpignan, Mont-de-Marsan, Pau, Bordeaux. In the centre were Clermont-Ferrand and Tours, and in the east: Strasbourg, Metz and Nancy.

Around 9500 cars were burned across the whole of France, reaching a peak of 1400 vehicles on the night of 6 and 7 November. Dozens of buses were also burned (the RATP listed 140, of which 10 buses and RER were attacked by burning projectiles).

Dozens of public buildings, crèches, schools (particularly nursery schools), gymnasiums, multimedia libraries, ordinary libraries, but also warehouses and businesses have been burned but the “damage” has also hit the following educational establishments: colleges (92 hit out of a total of 5200), secondary schools (49 out of 2500) and primary schools (106 out of 51000). In around 20% of cases the damage has disturbed the functioning of classes. The post office (La Poste) has counted a hundred or so vehicles burned and 51 offices affected, of which 6 have had to temporarily close.

According to the *Fédération française des sociétés d'assurances* (FFSA), the destruction must have cost around 200 million euros to the insurance companies, 20 million of that just for the cars. By comparison, the floods of December 2003 cost them 700 million euros, the most insurance companies have ever paid out in France.

According to the latest list drawn up by the Ministry of Justice on 30 November, there have been 4770 arrests, almost half after the incidents were over, leading to 4402 held in police custody. 763 people have been sent to prison, more than a hundred of them minors, the youngest being aged 10. 135 judicial inquiries have been opened, 562 adults locked up (of which 422 were sentenced at an immediate appearance before a judge to prison terms, 45 to community service orders or suspended sentences, 59 discharged and 36 still waiting) and 577 minors have been presented to juvenile court judges (of which 118 are placed under a committal order)⁷.

It is worth saying that 9 out of 10 of those arrested were owners of a French ID card and that more than a third were not the children of immigrants and that a good proportion of them had a job.

A cop who beat a youth to the ground in the Nord de Paris suburb was locked up on Friday 9 November and then freed on the 15th. The heaviest sentence was handed down in the case of a young man of 20, sentenced to four years in prison in Arras (North) for the deliberate burning of two shops.

Around 12,000 police and gendarmes, supported by surveillance helicopters, were deployed across France. Some 3000 police were mobilised in Paris for the weekend of 11 November. According to police sources, 26 police and gendarmes were injured in all.

UNDENIABLE FACTS

Right from the start it must be understood that this movement remained excessively minoritarian. On Sunday 6 November, the high point of the events, there were at most 10,000 people more or less directly involved in the incidents. All the accounts agree (with the exception of Clichy-sous-bois, cradle of the confrontations) in saying that the people implicated acted in groups of 10 to 50, sometimes less. The extension of the clashes, surpassing 300 places⁸ across the country, is inversely proportional to their rootedness, as is demonstrated by the waning, certainly uneven and gradual, of the conflict in its initial locations. This is why it is not wrong to estimate the participants as, at most, scarcely 15,000 people in the whole of France throughout the duration of the events. Looking at the number arrested, more than 3000 (which showed, as usual, a participation of all the categories of the neighbourhoods concerned, apart from women, which indicates an important limit), it is obvious that

⁷ In the course of the procedure the children's judge can order a “provisional work placement”, “legal restrictions”, a “provisional detention” or a “monitored freedom”. During the judgement, instead of a punishment, the minor can be made the object of an educative measure (an admonishment, a presentation to the parents, a work placement or some kind of reparation).

⁸ But certain towns are conspicuous by their absence (Mantes-la-jolie, Chanteloup-les-vignes, Nanterre, Bagneux, for example) or only experienced minimal confrontations (Marseille for example). Why did these towns have no or very few incidents? Recalling the weight of the Islamists, the local “businessmen”, the older brothers or politics led by the municipalities doesn't explain everything. If the large scale black economy doesn't like riots because they lead to more police, the same doesn't go for the small scale business at the bottom of the chain. So, it is very likely that the little dealers participated in the riots.

the military advantage remained with the forces of repression. The protesters rapidly avoided direct confrontations with the latter, opting instead for the multiplication of isolated acts, led by small groups, against private and state property. At the same time, the forces of repression reduced the occasions of direct contact to a strict minimum and in the end came close to avoiding battles, events which might have given a different turn to events. On the contrary, the forces of repression concentrated on increasing preventive and selective raids.

In the absence of any message or demand coming explicitly from the rioters, we have to stick to the facts to try and gain an appreciation of the situation.

Thousands of vehicles have been set on fire in the same neighbourhoods that the rioters come from; schools have been attacked; class rooms destroyed; firemen, public transport workers and isolated proletarians have been robbed and, sometimes, savagely attacked. One aspect of these events has been to concentrate into a small period of time the things which normally happen in the same places all year round⁹.

These deplorable acts are not happening on the margins of a movement with various objectives and forms of struggle compatible with the independent struggle of the proletariat. Unfortunately, they represent the most important aspect of the acts set out here. That is why we consider that these acts are lacking in any kind of basic class politics.

The expression of hatred against the condition you are subjected to is in no way tolerable when it expresses itself by targeting other proletarians, other sectors of the exploited and oppressed class.

The war between poor people is the worst manifestation of the domination of capital. It is something which removes any hope for a radical transformation of the present situation.

Class hatred in various forms (defensive and political) is, on the contrary, the best manifestation of the will of the proletariat to exist by and for itself, in a process of struggle for its political unification against capital and the state. Nothing of this appears in the burnt out wrecks of cars and buses and the intimidation and violence against other workers. The appearance in the neighbourhoods hit by the riots of large sectors of the working class population who appeal to the state to restore order does not augur well. This behaviour confirms in its turn the present inability to overcome the deep divisions and the “every man for himself” mentality which rules in the estates as elsewhere.

THE REACTION OF THE STATE AND THE POLITICAL FORCES WHICH SUPPORT IT

IN THE GOVERNMENT

Now we'll look at the management of the crisis by the state and the political forces which support it. The single slogan is the strengthening and rigorous application of the Law. Its culmination was the reactivation of the law of 1955 establishing a selective curfew – a measure which was prolonged on 15 November for three months. Even if its use (at the discretion of police chiefs) is far from being generalised, it allows repressive measures to be refined and used later. It habituates the population to an ever greater police presence and pushes back democratic protections. According to a survey appearing on Wednesday 9 November in the *Parisien/Aujourd'hui en France*, 73% of people interviewed about three of the principal measures of the Villepin plan, said they supported authorising of the use of curfews. There were 24% opposed and 3% didn't say. In response to the question “*What is your attitude to what is happening in the suburbs at the moment?*”, 58% said they were “*scandalised*” – the rate amongst the inhabitants of the suburbs was 60%. 28% said they were “*upset*” (25 % for the inhabitants of the suburbs), 12% were “*understanding*” (14% in the suburbs), and 1% were “*in sympathy*”.

The ministers of the Villepin government stuck to the defence of republican order with a glorious unity. “*The government is unanimous in its firmness*”, thundered Nicolas Sarkozy on Saturday 5 November, coming out of a crisis meeting in Matignon. The calls for national unity then increased. >From Thursday 3 November, the president of the UDF, François Bayrou, felt that the situation in the suburbs merited a “*national common front*”. The same day, Eric Raoult, UMP deputy mayor of Raincy, participated in a silent march of more than 500 people through the estate of Mity d'Aulnay-

⁹ In France, 35,000 cars are burned per year and buses are regularly stoned.

sous-Bois, in the company of Socialists Harlem Désir (an old militant of the LCR and founder of SOS Racisme) and Jacques Séguéla as well as the Stalinist Jean-Pierre Brard, deputy mayor of Montreuil (allied to the PCF). *“Our march is not political. What’s more, all those elected have been invited, the right as well as the left”*, said the UMP MP known for his old associations with the far right, for whom *“a fire extinguisher does not have a political colour”*. The Right also used these incidents as a pretext for justifying its *“urban renovation plan”*. *“That makes 25 years that we have waited, the social cohesion plan¹⁰ and its 15 billion makes twenty years we waited”*, cried Jean-Louis Borloo, Employment Minister. *“We launched a plan 18 months ago: close to 25 billion euros to transform the estates, double social housing, urban free zones. All that takes time and it is time that we are trying to speed up, that we are trying to reduce in the framework of a united government”*, the minister insisted¹¹.

These intentions were translated into a package of measures, announced with great pomp on 8 November. Here they are:

Employment:

All the youth of less than 25, looking for work or not, living in one of the 750 “sensitive areas”, will be called in for an “in-depth interview” in the next three months by the ANPE, in the local offices or in the Job Centres. A “specific solution” will be proposed to them in the following three months (education, training or a contract).

Those receiving benefits for those on the lowest incomes (“minima sociaux”) will be encouraged to find a job by the creation of a bonus of 1000 euros and an all-inclusive monthly bonus of 150 euros for 12 months.

20,000 support contracts for jobs and future contracts reserved for disadvantaged neighbourhoods will be created to develop jobs in the localities.

Fifteen new free zones will be added to the 85 existing ones.

The number of “adult intermediaries” maintaining the link between families and public institutions will be doubled.

Housing:

The funds of the Urban Regeneration Agency will be increased by 25% over two years.

Education:

¹⁰ The local councillors of every political stripe are very sensitive to this part of the governmental programme. Each one fights to obtain financial means from the central state. In this connection, here is an extract from an article published in *Le Monde* on 5 November 2005:

With the redeployment of the local police, the councillors regret the reduction of the credits of the Intervention Funds for the town and of its subsidies to the associations present in the so-called sensitive areas. On 6 October, when she was still the Vice President of the National Council of Towns (CNV), Véronique Fayet, deputy (UDF) to the mayor of Bordeaux, deplored their reduction of 40% between 2004 and 2005. The government has certainly begun a reform of the Urban Solidarity Allocation (DSU), so as to bail out the finances of the poorest municipalities to the tune of 120 million additional euros per year over five years. But this oxygen mask must serve above all to improve the conditions of “everyday life” and not to “promote social ties in the estates”, said Mme Fayet. In Tourcoing, the number of police officers has gone from 350 to 150, and the removal of a state subsidy of 400,000 euros could affect the plan for educational success. In Sarcelles (Val-d’Oise), *“the state credits to associations have fallen by 20% per year”* since 2003, noted the Socialist Party mayor of the town, François Pupponi. Two of the biggest structures, Accueil et Culture (“Welcome and Culture”) and Sarcelles-Jeunes (“Sarcelles-Youth”), have been forced to stop literacy courses and educational support through inability to pay staff. *“It is dramatic”*, fumed M. Pupponi, *“With 30% unemployment in some neighbourhoods, we shouldn’t be allowed to lose a single euro”*. The gradual disappearance of youth jobs and the reduction of subsidised contracts harms the associations just as much. The “Support Funds for Integration and the Struggle Against Discrimination” (Fasild) have been redirected into the reception of new arrivals, where it supports numerous local initiatives. The result: the Muslim organisations step into the void. *“We are witnessing a very clear advance of cultural associations”* said a representative anonymously. *“They are not islamists but they engage in proselytism. And, above all, they position themselves as spokespeople to the public authorities on social problems”*.

¹¹ We should bear in mind that the French state devotes 1.9% of GDP to various social benefits related to housing, one of the highest percentages in the EU. Between now and 2011, 250,000 social dwellings will be demolished before being reconstructed and 40,000 will be rehabilitated. In mid-July the *Agence nationale de rénovation urbaine* (ANRU), which centralises these measures, had agreed to 124 projects in 224 neighbourhoods classified as sensitive, coming to a total of 14.5 billion euros.

The creation of 5000 assistant teaching posts in 1200 colleges in “sensitive neighbourhoods”.

A doubling of the number of educational success teams foreseen by the social cohesion plan (1000 at the end of 2007).

The possibility of entering an apprenticeship at the age of 14, rather than 16 at present.

100,000 merit scholarships will be awarded after the school holidays in 2006, against 30,000 at present.

The opening of ten extra educational success boarding schools “*for the most promising and most motivated pupils*”.

Health:

Development of town health centres to link up health workers. An increase in the resources of mobile psychosocial teams.

Integration:

The creation of an agency for social cohesion and equality of opportunity which will be the “spokesman for the mayors”. The creation of administrators dedicated to equality of opportunity.

Associations:

A hundred million additional euros will be allocated to 14,000 associations subsidised by the state in 2006.

Security:

The Ministry of the Interior will recruit 2000 additional officers for the disadvantaged neighbourhoods, within the framework of contracts providing access to employment, starting in January 2006.

The Villepin operation is ambitious. Its general aim is “*to repair social bonds in the sensitive urban areas*”, as a means of reinforcing various local decentralised bodies which are assigned to create a state net around proletarian neighbourhoods. The serious weakening of the political structures and local organisations of the parties of the left of capital has left a void which the state must fill. This will be achieved by various means, from the multiplication and diffusion of professional people charged with establishing an intermediary relation with the centralised parts of the state, to the revitalisation through subsidies of associations of all kinds, intended to organise and channel the discontent of the suburbs towards democratic forms and objectives.

By this plan the state shows that it has understood, and duly exploited, one of the most important limits of these incidents: the extremely separated nature of the violent reactions, which in turn calls for differentiated and local treatments. The mayors and the administrators thus see themselves as having the function of nerve centres in the operation of the state recovery of the working class periphery. The state also takes another step towards the “reactivation” of the unemployed by means of a more detailed and individualised monitoring of its jobless. The measures taken according to this plan, notably the lowering of the age of apprentices, the new economic incentives proposed to the long-term unemployed for them to find work and the establishment of new free zones (that is to say, zones subject to lower taxation), contributes to the well-advanced process of destructuring of the labour market.

New insecure and/or under-paid figures will emerge into the light of day in perfect legality. As for the schooling system, the government will count exclusively on reinforcing the supervision and surveillance teams. No additional teachers and no increased study resources. By this it confirms that “National Education” in working class neighbourhoods comes down to a place for storing a potentially excess work force.

The anti-proletarian sense of the Villepin operation has nevertheless not been understood by many workers. According to the estate poll referred to earlier by the *Parisien/Aujourd'hui en France*, the re-establishment of the financing of associations working in the suburbs on housing and education aid is approved by 89% of those asked (9% against, 2% without an opinion). As for the lowering of the age of apprenticeship from 16 to 14, it is supported by 83% (16% against, 1% didn't say).

But the government won't leave it there. Profiting from its advantage, because it has well and truly won a victory on the level of public opinion by profiting from the fear aroused by the events, it is going to announce (on 29 November) a collection of measures clearly directed against present and future immigrants. Let's note the essential points:

- Prolonging the two year delay after which a foreigner who has married a French citizen

and is living with them can ask for French nationality. It will be four years for a couple resident in France, five if they are not,

- Prolonging to two years (it's one at present) the time of residence in France after which it is possible to ask for family entry and settlement¹²,
- Systematic verification of respect for the law which forbids polygamy in France¹³,
- Additional selection of foreign students before their entry into France. *"We must make sure that the best amongst them come to us and don't go elsewhere"* declared Villepin (it being understood that the "worst" won't come),
- The fixing of four additional criteria in the granting of student visas: a study plan, academic and personal career, linguistic competence, state of bilateral relations with the country of origin.

More than this, it is a question of using these measures to test on the students the concept of *"selected immigration"* launched by Sarkozy, which is intended to be extended to "skilled workers" in a future immigration law. It fixes an objective of 25,000 immigrants in an irregular situation to be expelled in 2006. *"France no longer wants those who aren't wanted in any other part of the world"* he says and continues to unveil the general philosophy of the legal project which he intends to put before Parliament at the beginning of 2006: *"to bring imposed immigration under control so as to develop a selected immigration"*.¹⁴

Sarkozy continues by judging that *"social rights [for the immigrants] must not be superior in France to those provided elsewhere in Europe. These social rights must only be conceived of in a provisory manner, linked to a situation of urgency until the return to the country of origin"* adding that *"The illegal migrant does not have a right to residence but he does have the right to access to treatment through state medical aid, the right to schooling for his children and the right to emergency housing"*.

Carrying on, he confirms his desire to *"break the automatic link between marriage and the right to residence"* for foreigners in an irregular situation when they marry, while adding to this a suspensive measure – *"The freedom to marry a foreigner in an irregular situation is constitutionally protected. But nothing prevents us from abolishing the automatic acquisition of a right to residence after the marriage!"* – and linking family entry to the possession of *"resources and housing"*.

Without any doubt these measures constitute an aggravation of the conditions of life of immigrants, whether "illegal" or "legal".

IN THE OPPOSITION

As for the left of capital, its critiques of the government cannot hide a profound identity of objectives on the essential thing: the re-establishment of order. On Sunday 6 November, reviving its long repressive tradition, the PCF called *"for the re-establishment of order"*. *"The propagation of acts of violence is unacceptable for the populations concerned. Order must be re-established. It is urgent to take a series of measures which will allow us to put an end to a more and more dangerous development. The security of everyone cannot be re-established by accepting the escalation of violence"*, wrote the Stalinist party. On the same day the president of the Plaine municipality¹⁵, also an eminent member of the PCF and unfailing friend of the Trotskyists of the LCR, Patrick Braouzec, called to be received by the Prime Minister and demanded a *"Grenelle¹⁶ of working class neighbourhoods"*. The national unity of salvation advances...

12 The government justifies this by the fact that *"family settlement is today the second source of legitimate immigration after marriage. It involved 25,000 people in 2004, a number which has been stable for several years"*.

13 The government thus echoes the most extreme reactionaries who see in polygamy one of the causes, if not the cause, of the events.

14 The number of deportations of foreigners in irregular situations has strongly increased: 12,000 in 2003, 15,000 in 2004 and 20,000 in 2005.

15 A community grouping eight towns of Seine-Saint-Denis: Aubervilliers, Epinay-sur-Seine, La Courneuve, l'Île-Saint-Denis, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Saint-Denis, Stains and Villetaneuse.

16 *Translator's Note* - it was the Grenelle Accords between the unions and the government which ended the May '68 revolt.

In the Stalinist camp the gold police medal must go without contest to the deputy mayor of Vénissieux, André Gérin, who addressed a letter dated 7 November to Jacques Chirac. Here it is:

Monsieur President,

I subscribe to your proposals for re-establishing order. French society is drifting. The Republic is threatened. We can see the germs of civil war peeping out. There can be no hesitation: re-establishing order is the priority.

All the political leaders, of the left as well as the right, must speak with the same voice. The hour is at hand for republican unity to eradicate the gangrene, the barbarism, the savagery. We must put an end to social and moral deterioration, the compost which grows hatred and violence.

France is torn. On the one side is a working class youth which is sunk in poverty, which feels useless, rejected, sacrificed, entombed in a terrifying "no future". On the other, there is an opulent France keeping the fruits of growth and employment to itself while remaining deaf.

Each according to their convictions must give reasons for hope, to say to the youth: "France needs you, you need France." I am for a republican front where each political party of the left and the right is committed to uniting social and economic progress.

I propose that the Government puts in place an "Orsec plan" for the next six months associating all the political leaders and the mayors of the towns of France which are the most concerned.

Let's announce as national priorities the battle for full employment and education on all fronts. These are more than ever the keys to the future.

Some measures to discuss:

Free up some funds in the 2006 budget to take immediate measures against poverty and negative discrimination,

Sort out at all costs the 16/18 year olds with nothing to do.

Without training, without jobs, left to themselves, easy prey, they can fall into despair and hate.

They are at the heart of the crisis.

Reunite the thousands of economic actors with the authorities in each *département* here at the end of November to break the taboos which block employment.

Begin the generalisation of paid apprenticeships, from the age of 14, in liaison with the colleges.

Mobilise the 22 regions of France and the national structures to orient training towards employment in a voluntarist fashion.

Monsieur President of the Republic, since the years 1974/1975 France has regressed. You were the Prime Minister. Finance is turned against employment, against the social, creating terrible fractures which you yourselves have echoed.

All the accompanying policies have ended in stinging failure. The blindness of all economic, of all financial policies has created the fractures.

It is a matter of urgency to reconcile social progress and economic progress, to join together industry, employment, social issues, at the same time.

There was an electric shock on 21 April 2002 and more recently on 29 May from millions of French people who expressed their rejection of elites and the political class, testifying to a profound feeling of abandonment.

The hour has come for mobilisation at all levels of society. The situation is serious. I love France and I am not afraid of going beyond the partisan spirit. The polemics of politicians and their personal rivalries are pathetic. We need a republican front to assure in the continuity of public security the civil defence of the citizens.

Monsieur President of the Republic, we will win the battle to maintain order by responding to the cry of the youth, to the cry of the working classes who no longer accept living behind the bars of poverty, exclusion and contempt. We are on the verge of an explosion.

It is up to us to say to the youth of France that there is a chance. We must have the courage to look them straight in the eye for them to recover their pride. We owe them firmness but also consideration, affection. They are entitled to expect us to be exemplary.

Here, it seems to me, is the message which must be born by the President of the Republic and his

government.

Please accept, Monsieur President of the Republic, the expression of my high esteem for you.

André GERIN

PCF Deputy Mayor of Vénissieux

The PS call for more police stations and more so-called local police. *“The disappearance of local police is a grave error. The officers involved in this task had little by little gained the trust of our citizens... Yet urgency demands the return to a climate of calm, in Clichy-sous-Bois and in the neighbouring municipalities. This requires, notably, the presence of a police station which we have ceaselessly, vainly, asked for”*, said Claude Dilain, mayor of Clichy-sous-Bois and vice president of the National Council of Towns (CNV).

The LCR, for its part, called for a return of *“the democratic and progressive forces to the suburbs”*. It supported organising with them *“a peaceful march, leaving the neighbourhoods to demand the resignation of Sarkozy and the measures necessary for a life which is social, solidaric and collective”*. These Trotskyists forgot rather too quickly that many of the municipalities targeted by these incidents are administered by their same friends on the left of capital, the PS and PCF, valiant defenders of the reestablishment of order. Masters in the art of doing the splits, unconcerned about demonstrating any kind of coherence, the Trotskyists of the LCR, after expressing themselves in favour of marches in white, incited proletarians to brave the curfew. Naturally, as is their habit, they did not take any action and, fortunately, the workers understood instructions of the leftists for what they were: wind.

“The everyday violence in these neighbourhoods is perhaps the work of hoodlums and drug dealers”, opined Arlette Laguiller, spokesperson for *Lutte ouvrière*. *“But why have the hoodlums, they are always there, found the support of a good part of the youth today? Why do the explosions of violence following each other against the police involve far more youths than just the little caïds of the neighbourhood? Because there isn’t a single youth in these neighbourhoods who hasn’t realised that in the eyes of Sarkozy’s police, the ‘scum’ are the poor, all the poor, and not only some hoodlums and drug dealers. Because, for most of them, the future is blocked and without hope”* she continued.

Beyond stating the obvious, the only solution which she puts forward is for the youth of the poor neighbourhoods to wait for the message of the working class while it recovers its capacity to react to the offensive of the bosses and the government. Just one question. Are not the “youths” involved in the confrontations themselves, in the great majority of cases, proletarians? It’s a bit meagre to propose to sectors of the population who live in a permanent state of acute destitution that they wait. In this connection, what of the old demand of *Lutte Ouvrière* for “more police truly linked to the population”?¹⁷

17 “A few months ago, the Jospin government wiped away the discontent of the police and gendarmes, elsewhere stirred up by the right. On some TV reports we could see what a state of dilapidation a number of police stations were in or hear some officers tell of how, in the Essonne region for example, of 250 police vehicles, neither powerful nor of recent vintage, 50 were permanently immobilised for repair. But even this situation will not change, despite the securitarian poses of Sarkozy and Chirac. Because if the bourgeoisie and its state have need of a police force, it is to provide their own security against the population and not for the security of the population itself, and they will certainly not renounce any of the windfall which feeds private profits from the coffers of the state”. (*Lutte Ouvrière*, no.1765, 24 May 2002)

“The policy of state budgetary restrictions has led in its turn to a degradation of public services. Insufficient public transport, a lack of staff in the post offices and in educational establishments, and the almost complete disappearance of police officers in working class neighbourhoods, have added to the general degradation. And we add to all this the retreat of the presence of militants and workers’ organisations which developed sentiments of solidarity and maintained a certain pride in belonging to the world of work, which has today largely disappeared. So, if we really want to attack the problem at its root, we have to start by giving the means to the public services, which they certainly need, and why not recruit bus drivers and postal workers from among the inhabitants of the estates? As for the tasks of the police indispensable to collective life, they must be assured by people sufficiently close to the inhabitants of the neighbourhood where they are assigned so as to be able to defuse conflicts well. This would be far preferable to those police patrols which, failing to ensure a real presence, immediately go for tough-guy tactics when the tension mounts. To educate, to ensure the integration of the youth, to develop public services, to create real jobs, to turn back the march of social degradation which we

Besides their joint work as social fire extinguishers, the left and the right of capital share the task of dramatising the phenomenon. This is part of a well-established tradition in France. They justify themselves above all by the “eruptive character”¹⁸ of the subordinate classes in this country. Once again, as in May 1968, the dominant classes in France know that relying on the deterioration of the situation and simple repression is not enough to restore established order. On the contrary... It is therefore above all from necessity and from consciousness of the danger that the executive power decided to not “underestimate” the events unfolding in the suburbs. A sort of plan of preventive counter-revolution has thus been put in place. The second reason for this strong reaction on the side of the state consists in the fact that the present foundation of the executive is not sufficiently solid and extensive. A sort of national catharsis ending in a patriotic unity rediscovered around the events could very well be what the rulers of the country are after. This recipe, let’s not forget, is the one that was so successful for Gaullism and the Fifth Republic. The objective, clearly set out by several party leaders, is that of a national front in defence of common republican values. This front would reunite the left and the right, paving the way towards a full and complete restoration of state authority. What are the components of this front in formation?

A COMMON FRONT FOR THE REESTABLISHMENT OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE STATE

The political parties

The context of urban violence is favourable for the formation of a social reactionary bloc constructed on the basis of more or less spontaneous reactions. Behind the official appeal to good will, the formation of militias is taking shape. Manuel Aeschlimann, the UMP mayor of Asnières (Hauts-de-Seine), has created an “*Asnières citizens’ watch committee*”. To the volunteers who met at 9 p.m. in front of the town hall, it is necessary to give “*means of telephonic communication, cameras and fire extinguishers*”. For the mayor, the time has come to “*let the whingers wallow in their politically correct passivity*”. However, only thirty or so turned up in the whole town. Above all it was a media operation. On the side of the left, Gilles Poux, PCF mayor of La Courneuve marched under the banner of “*stop the violence*”, with community associations and representatives of the public services.

Manuel Valls, PS deputy mayor of Evry, solicited the active support of the population. This was also done by Michel Pajon. The (PS) mayor of Noisy-le-Grand (Seine-Saint-Denis) wrote to his administrators: “*I call for the mobilisation of all those who want to defend our town. Without substituting themselves for the forces of the police, the Noisy inhabitants who want to participate in the protection of their living space(...) can meet up in the course of the next few nights, with your mobilised representatives, inside or in front of schools, gymnasiums, crèches, buildings for everyone.*” A great deal preceded this appeal – the total destruction of the gymnasium, and more than thirty cars burned. “*Each night is a cause for concern*”, observed Manuel Valls. From their offices, transformed into crisis centres, they are in permanent liaison with the mayors of surrounding municipalities (of all stripes), the fire brigade and the police. Each one watches the slightest incident and fears the worst. “*We have to keep control*”, said Michel Pajon who called for the use of troops. From now on they all call for private security companies or for social mediation. “*They are in t-shirts, cool, but I have come to understand that these men have themselves become subjected to a powerful control*”, sighed Gilbert Roger, the PS mayor of Bondy, just before midnight¹⁹.

Roger was originally responsible, with Claude Bartolone, the MP for Seine-Saint-Denis,

are seeing, all this can be done with the support and collaboration of the population. But obviously, even if that was done, even with an effort sustained over a long time, it would take time to get back on our feet from the social degradation of the of recent years”. (Lutte Ouvrière, no.1764, 17 May 2002)

¹⁸ “*In this suspicious, eruptive country, the smallest movement costs the authorities a great deal of energy to avoid a crowd of malcontents immediately coalescing against them. The authorities can therefore no longer act. They fidget. They occupy space, stand on the stage, taking in the looks which everyone turns on them, without ever allowing them the slightest respite. It is necessary to explain, to justify, to convince even before being able to do, always menaced by doubt, bad faith, being judged on intention alone, rumours*” (Dominique de Villepin, in *The cry of the Gargoyles*, page 88, Albin Michel, 2002).

¹⁹ See *Le Monde* of 08/11/2005

Claude Dilain, the mayor of Clichy-sous-Bois and Franck Puponi, mayor of Sarcelles, for an appeal signed by a few dozen elected Socialists, including Bertrand Delanoë, mayor of Paris. Launched outside the party, this text mixes in everything by calling for “*a rapid return to civil peace*” and emergency measures beginning with the “*re-establishment of the authority of the state*”.

To accelerate the return to “civil peace”, mayors of the right and the left and various associations called for the organised vigilance of groups of citizens. Groups of inhabitants of the estates thus watched over their territory, in particular public buildings targeted for damage (schools, crèches, cultural centres and other places). In the great majority of cases these initiatives were not transformed into the creation of militias auxiliary to the forces of repression. However, it is important to remember that the dominant classes had openly envisaged the constitution of groupings of citizens charged with protecting public places and establishing an information network for the police.

The Islamic organisations

Like the other associations, they tried to consolidate their role as unions of the suburbs in relation to the state. Very present on the ground (30 beardies for 8 municipal mediators in Grigny, for example), the religious people mostly played for a return to calm. The *Union des organisations islamiques de France* (UOIF) called for young Muslims involved to “*calm their anger, to mull things over and to conform to the fatwa*” decreed in the aftermath of the events. In this fatwa “*it is formally forbidden for any Muslim seeking divine satisfaction and grace to participate in any action which blindly attacks private or public property or which can endanger the lives of others*”. “*Contributing to these acts of violence is a forbidden act*” the text continues. “*Any Muslim living in France, whether he is a French citizen or a guest, has the right to demand the scrupulous respect of his person, his dignity and his convictions and to act for more equality and social justice*”, it concluded. The UOIF condemned the violence “*with the utmost firmness*” and called “*insistently for a return to calm in the shortest possible time*”. According to the UOIF, these events “*seem to lay bare the grave deficiencies of the French model of integration which obviously plunges ten of thousands of young people from difficult neighbourhoods into despair and misery*”. The UOIF supports the organisation of a national conference on the suburbs and youth.

The intervention of UOIF provoked an immediate response from the web site *oumma.com*, the principal French language Muslim site. “*This fatwa concocted by the UOIF, only serves to communalise and confessionalise social problems, thus giving credence to the view that the motivations of the ‘smashers’ can be explained by their supposed Islamicness: they are delinquents because they are above all Muslims or rather, according to the statements of the UOIF, ‘bad Muslims’, because the smashers do not conform to the verses of the Koran*”.

Oumma.com accused the UOIF of having become a “*security auxiliary to the Ministry of the Interior*” or even of playing the role of “*French Islam’s CRS*”. More traditional, the *Union des mosquées Rhône-Alpes* (Umra) declared itself available for “*any step towards civil harmony*” in the suburbs. But without “*any wish to replace economic and social policies*”, according to its president and rector of the Lyon mosque, Kamel Kabtane. “*The Union of Rhône-Alpes Mosques ardently calls for the return to calm and renews its availability for any step towards civil harmony. On the other hand, it refuses to take a position which does not belong to it and has no wish to replace the economic and social policies which alone can convince the youth of the suburbs that they are also the youth of France*”.

The associations

On the television channel TF1, on 7 November, Dominique de Villepin executed a spectacular volte-face: “*We have reduced the contributions to the associations in recent years,*” he recognised with an astonishing frankness, “*well, we are going to restore this contribution, whether it is a question of the big associations or the little ones which are in contact with everyday life and helping with housing and schooling*”. If the money promised by the Prime Minister is effectively released, this will constitute a breath of fresh air for the local players who, for three years, have been in the habit of orienting themselves to the local authorities whose means can in no way compare with those of the state. The result is that the associations have found themselves confronted with “*an enormous para-*

dox”, according to Jean-Pierre Worms, president of the FONDA²⁰. “In the present crisis the public authorities need citizens to mobilise themselves in an associative form and, at the same time, the means of the associations have been drastically diminished”. Dominique de Villepin seems to have got the message.

The result is that 100 million euros will be released in 2006 for the associations, considered as “*an indispensable complement to the action of the state*”. “*Recognising that the subsidies have been withdrawn and wanting to re-establish them is all well and good, but when the associations have disappeared it will not be so simple to repair the social fabric*”, declared Pierre Henry, director of France Terre d'Asile²¹.

THE ANALYSIS AND THE POSITION OF COMMUNISTS

It goes without saying that for communists the central question is not to contest the use of force. The condition which the proletariat is put in by capitalist social relations cries out for its most determined use, now and always. Transformatory violence thus remains a firm point of the class struggle and a central element of the revolutionary programme. There is thus no place for stigmatising rioters because they have chosen this terrain. Nor do we associate ourselves with populations who demand the restoration of social peace by capitalist troops.

In the same way, we think that the network of associations and religious organisations plays above all a role of co-opting and neutralising subversive impulses which might emerge. Veritable forward observation posts of the state, they live off its often generous aid and they diffuse ideologies, secular or otherwise, of submission. The proletariat is not a sick body which needs to be treated with the opium of the beyond or the Republic.

So, we do not waste time analysing the events to see if they are justified. Many rioters have said that they have used the death of the two adolescents from Clichy-sous-Bois as a pretext to revolt against their situation. “*The deaths of the two youths and the tear gas bomb fired at the Clichy-Montfermeil mosque were only a detonator*”, a young rioter from Sevran in the Paris suburbs explained to a journalist from the *Parisien*. The desire of this minority of young people to express as loudly as possible their rage against the forces of repression is completely comprehensible and justified. “*We have to put up with checkpoints and insults for nothing. They treat us like cattle. We have nothing to lose. They don't care what they arrest us for*”, said other youths. There's nothing to add to these points. The problem is not this but in the fact that the informal political expression of this urban violence²² is not compatible with the perspective of independent proletarian struggle.

All sorts of contaminations, not necessarily expressing themselves in the present confrontations, constitute a backdrop to them, of such a kind that it is not possible to defend them as such. Let's review them without compromise:

- Tribalism²³ dominates the environment of these neighbourhoods. The frequent wars between gangs, criminal organisations most often founded on an ethnic and/or territorial basis, shows this;
- Machismo and violence against young women, who hope to leave the hellish places in one way or another, have dangerously increased. “*The only thing which counts is money, sex and the law of the strongest. They can kill you just because you refuse to give them a cigarette*”²⁴,

20 An association, founded in 1981, which is in charge of promoting the associations law of 1901.

21 An organisation which campaigns for the rights of refugees. It has almost 300 staff and is partly funded by the EU. *Translator's Note*

22 “In 1998, the police chief Lucienne Bui-Trong, then head of the towns and suburbs section of the RG [Renseignements généraux – a branch of the French police dealing with political security], created a Richter Scale of urban violence which classified neighbourhoods from 1 to 8 according to their explosive potential. In the following year this tool gave birth to Saivu, the System of Computer Analysis of Urban Violence. From the first year Saivu recorded 28,858 acts of urban violence against 3000 in 1992, and 818 sensitive neighbourhoods in place of 106 previously. Disturbing tendencies were then confirmed, such as the phenomenon of violent gangs, the black economy, arson, and attacks on anything which symbolised authority. As the mercury continued to rise, the National Police Headquarters decided to scuttle Saivu, which finally disappeared in 2003” (Le Point, 4 November 2005).

23 A marriage between staircase gangs and recognition of “ethnic” origins.

24 It is obvious that people don't die every day because they refuse a cigarette, but this miscellaneous fact, even

said the 43 year old Cameroonian Pierre N'Doh to the weekly *Le Point*. He was the founder of the *Organisation des banlieues unies* in 1990. At the time it “wanted to federate the estates of the Paris region to influence the policies of the city”;

- The black economy of drugs and stolen goods has taken a central place in many neighbourhoods, reinforcing parallel structures of social control based on the absolute power of the *caïds*. “In the estates there is no longer anything but the black economy”. Consequently, “those who go to work every morning hug the walls. They no longer have respect. Here, to be called a victim is an insult”, says Pierre N'Doh²⁵;
- “The islamisation of souls” has made some headway. The reaction following the tear gas in the Clichy-Montfermeil mosque bears eloquent testimony to this. The reactionary myth of the holy warrior seems to have a good press, including amongst sectors of youth who don't follow the precepts of the Koran. As a structuring factor in an environment where the family is breaking up under the blows of capitalist social relations, Islam provides ideological reasons for opposing yourself to the “whites” and for subjugating women, who are generally more inclined to benefit from the dissolution of the tribal family by gaining the advantage of individual freedom. The imagery of holy war against the West has some success. “It's a little Baghdad every evening”, says Draman, a 17 year old inhabitant of Aulnay-sous-Bois, originally from Mali, to a journalist from the *Parisien*. Over the course of the recent events, Muslim organisations absent from the incidents are putting themselves forward (not without success, notably in Clichy-sous-Bois and Montfermeil) as mediators. They want to be defenders of the rioters' reasons while encouraging the latter to delegate negotiations with the state to them²⁶.

This is why the context makes us say that these beginnings of riots have little in common with the first season of revolts which began in Vénissieux in 1981 and which culminated in Vaulx-en-Velin in October 1990.

On 6 October 1990, a motorbike overturned at a police roadblock which tried to stop it. The death of the passenger, a disabled youth, Thomas Claudio, unleashed the anger of the youth of Vaulx-en-Velin. Confrontations with the police took place, the burning and looting of the shopping centre followed. On 8 October 1990, *Le Progrès de Lyon* ran the headline: “Vaulx-en-Velin. The riot”. The following phrase comes from the article on the inside pages: “Nine years after Vénissieux, the disease of the suburbs has never been cured”. The daily *Libération* of 8 October 1990 said: “In Lyons there is a long list of victims which yesterday fed the anger of the young rioters. In October '82, Wahid Hachichi (Vaulx-en-Velin) and Ahmed Bouteija (Bron) were killed. In November '82, the policeman Bernard Taffine beat Mohamed Abidou. Case dismissed. On 6 March '85, Barded Barka, 15 years old (Vaulx-en-Velin) is killed at a checkpoint. The policeman is transferred. Mustapha Kacir (Vaulx-en-Velin) is beaten by two gendarmes in June '85. No judicial consequences. In September '85, Noredine Mechta is done in by the bouncers at a night club. Aziz Bougheza, in Mions, fell in June '87, also to a gendarme's bullets. Farid Oumrani, 17 years old, was killed in autumn '88 by a bullet in the back from a taxi driver. In December '89, Abdallah Bouafia, 42 years old and a father of two, died in Lyons following torture by four security guards. On 9 August '90, Akim Merabet (in Crémieu), 22 years old, is murdered like his brother was 18 months earlier.” Even the daily *Le Figaro*, a faithful friend of the police, had to admit, in its edition of 9 October that “Claudio Thomas [...] is the eleventh victim of various unfortunate events. Eleven victims, of which ten have foreign sounding names. Eleven victims of police checks which have taken a bad turn because the person being checked tried to flee or had an aggressive demeanour and the police, considering it legitimate defence, opened fire. Rather too quickly, without doubt”.

if it is only the tip of the iceberg, reveals the permanent tension which rules in some suburbs.

²⁵ We should remember however that for thousands of workers, precarious or not, “deals” of all kinds are necessary to supplement their normally insufficient or unpredictable salary, whether they are sellers or buyers. It is not a matter of morality but of necessity.

²⁶ Calm returned on Sunday 29 October, in Clichy-sous-Bois, according to Larbi Chouaieb, president of the Muslim Federation of Clichy-Montfermeil, thanks to “dialogue” led by the mediators appointed by the mayor and the Muslim community.

Then, one police blunder unleashed, in this town in the Lyon suburbs, three days of mass confrontation with the forces of repression punctuated on the second day by the mass looting of the town's shopping centre. The Islamists were only just starting out and the proletarians of these suburbs were fighting against an accelerated Le Pen-isation of consciousness and of the official political life of the country. The following year was the turn of Saint-Denis on the Indian Ocean island of Réunion to feel the anger of the proletarians of the neighbourhood of Chaudron. Here also, battle lines against the forces of repression and the looting of big shopping centres punctuated the revolt of thousands of workers launched after a threatened seizure of Télé Free Dom (an oppositional leftist TV station). That same year we can also remember the mass riots in Sartrouville and Mantes-la-Jolie, in the suburbs of Paris. In all cases the proletarians actively involved in the fight did not separate themselves from other workers. There were attempts at coordination, although they were unfortunately aborted. Mass re-appropriation of goods was the rule, like in Los Angeles²⁷.

It is this perspective that we still defend today. It is not necessary to ask the young proletarians of the suburbs to wait, as the helpless *Lutte ouvrière* do, for the workers to get moving so that they can move in their turn. This vision implies that unemployed people or workers trapped in "little jobs" cannot really be part of the working class. They are a sort of feather-brained mass which it is necessary to control rather than assist in organising themselves. But it is also necessary to fight against the vision which wants these "new" proletarians to be sufficient in themselves. As long as the division remains between them and the "traditional" workers in more stable jobs, the only winners will be capital and the exploiters.

This is why it is necessary to work for the cessation of acts which only aggravate the already difficult situation of the working class. Only the direct intervention determined and without concessions, of conscious sectors of the proletariat can produce results which do not give grist to the state's mill. If the opposite occurs, the tendency which aims at normalising the situation will only be reinforced.

As for proletarians scared by urban violence, it is necessary that combative workers remind them that the principal source of all their ills is in the existing relations of production, in a society divided into classes. Attacking wealth wherever it is found, fighting the vampiric employers – those who make us work on the black, with greater flexibility and for lower wages –, fighting for better wages and more acceptable conditions of work, ridding working class neighbourhoods of the sellers of artificial dreams (drug dealers, preachers and various defenders of the state), openly fighting against machismo and tribalism, uniting with other workers in struggle whenever the occasion presents itself, whatever their origins, and, finally, organising ourselves in an independent way to reinforce the autonomous political struggle of the working classes, these are a few lines sketching out the revival of the class struggle in the working class peripheries.

Brussels-Paris, 1 December 2005

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27 Cf. the long analysis of the insurrection in Los Angeles published in *Mouvement Communiste* number 4 (winter 1992/1993). This text is available on the site www.mouvement-communiste.com