

# France, autumn 2010:

## The blockade of the economy as an obvious fact

*“In this dispute, one of both camps should give up. The struggle promises to be long and harsh. We don’t have another choice than to go towards a total blockade of the country. The imminent vote of the law should not stop us...”* (Excerpt from the editorial of the 1<sup>st</sup> issue of “Info-Luttes” – Caen, October 19<sup>th</sup> 2010).

### **When there are rumblings of discontentment in some bastions of social peace**

Since some years already, there is a tendency of Capital to increase its offensive against the survival conditions of an always bigger part of the humanity, provoking in many regions in the world important movements of struggle. Let’s mention the world wave of struggle in 2007-2008 labelled (and caricatured) as “hunger riots”, but also since then on, the struggles in Madagascar, Guadeloupe, Kirghizstan, China, Bangladesh, Mexico, Peru, Thailand, etc.

Until now, this offensive happened – geographically and chronologically– very unequally all over the planet. And this fact maintained among proletarians, living in regions where they were less frontally attacked, the ultimate illusion that while accepting umpteenth sacrifices, while giving up to really confront their exploiters during their struggles, while finally selling themselves to the “lesser evil”, they would save their skin from the “worse”.

The problem is not yet that they would have a staunch faith in the favourable next comeback of the “growth fruits” (which is nothing but a media incantation only for the attention of the masses and which economists and capitalists are laughing about in their lounges). The problem is also not that they would preserve a blind faith towards this collapsing system or towards those who stuff themselves while pretending to be at the helm of the world economy. All in all they survive more and more uncomfortably in the muted anxiety, ideologically exuded

by all possible means (television, culture, unions, narcoleptics, intravenous injections, etc.), that any mutiny ever so slightly consistent would carry them away in the wreck of the State.

It’s on this relatively fragile basis that the social peace has been globally maintained until now in countries of Western Europe and in the United States, in spite of movements of revolt of the most underprivileged sectors of the proletariat (particularly in the suburbs) that regularly break out there.



*“We don’t owe anything, let’s block all”*

However, the maintenance of these “bastions of social peace” constitutes in our opinion the key of the world capitalist domination: while ascertaining the obedience of a part of the proletariat, world Capital also

ascertains that these proletarians from “stable” countries and class brothers and sisters in struggle in the world don’t recognize each others, it ascertains to be able to continue to co-opt in these countries troops for repression armies (central as well as satellite ones), for world gendarmerie armies. And finally world Capital finds in these countries the means to finance these armies, their bases and their operations, while using the real or fictitious surplus value that social peace maintained to this end guarantees for it on the world market.<sup>1</sup> It’s *in this way*, in this sinister topography given to the world by the permanent war of each atom of Capital against all the others that the domination maintains, that the dictatorship of the economy maintains against us.<sup>2</sup>

It’s a well-oiled machine, indeed, but it doesn’t have anything with a *perpetuum mobile* that would put capital shielded from its fundamental contradiction. The bourgeois class, that personifies capital’s interests, never had and will never have, in spite of its multi-age-old and permanent political and military efforts in this sense, the capacity to determine as it wishes the world course of things, and this for the implacable reason that the bloodsucking and exponential needs of capital’s valorisation don’t leave any “choice” to its supporters, any possibility to put a brake on its course (whatever some sinister ideologists of “degrowth” view

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<sup>1</sup> Here’s an example that can’t be ignored showing that this more and more fictitious character is a part of the machine: the army of the main Gendarme-State in the world, so strong that continents and oceans are under its military control, is financed by the most abyssal and notorious public deficit in the world. The faith in the dollar is not anymore for a long time about its *real* value but on the capacity of the State that issues it to ensure social peace at home and abroad.

<sup>2</sup> Maybe it is useful here to recall the class barricade that separates us from euro-centrism and euro-racism, which are still today promoted by the whole Marxist-Leninist ideology with its epitome: i.e. the white factory worker duly unionized and disciplined. Countless of struggles of our class in the world (including in Europe, those of immigrants, those in the suburbs, etc.) are thus discredited by this ideology that considers them as non-proletarian, non-bearer of an antagonism to capital; they would be simple exotic and violent subclass riots from which the “real” proletariat has to turn away.

on the matter), any means to find even a partially solution for its catastrophic nature, and to postpone the process of its permanent attack against us. This process can only speed up at any level, and sooner or later the *relatively* preserved zones should also be subjected to brutal restructurings and measures of austerity, i.e. attacks on our wages and survival conditions that our enemies won’t be able to absorb without any reaction of our class, that our enemies won’t be able to assimilate to the “normal” and acceptable course of things, what will each time more and more bring into play the stability of the whole.

Thus currently, the fact to put on the agenda austerity policies in most European countries (and in certain cases, the most rigorous since 1945) and the reactions that they cause, create the objective conditions of a possible overcoming of this international *status quo*; they indicate the perspective that is furiously ours of an overthrowing of this pseudo fatality that constitutes the crushing our class struggles all over the world. In this way, the present period is incontestably a turning point.

After Greece, Spain, Portugal and France, it’s in England that new measures are now massively announced: wage cuts, increase in working time (length and intensity), layoffs, hard labour for unemployed, etc.

Of course, reactions to these measures of austerity take (and will take) various shapes according to the particular social, economic and political situations of the different countries concerned. But in spite of that, all these reactions nevertheless fundamentally express one and the same REFUSAL TO SACRIFICE OUR LIVES FOR SAVING THE COLLAPSED ECONOMY!

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### **The struggle against the retirement reform in France: unification and radicalisation of a deep and wider discontent**

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In France the first big measure of generalized austerity voted by the governmental majority of the president Nicolas Sarkozy consists in bringing the minimum age to go into retirement from 60 up to 62 years old. This kind of reforms clearly shows that the State doesn’t have the room for manoeuvre anymore to attack and target one sector after another, in order to avoid generalized

struggles. The retirement reform hastily voted in France is directly applicable to the whole of the workers on the national territory, what won't be without impact on the turn of the struggle. It's obviously one reform more on the list of all those passed against our class by this government and the previous ones these last years.

Without any surprise, the socialists (currently in the opposition) intend to take advantage of the unpopularity of this reform to prepare their return to the government and the Élysée palace. Behind their conventional condemnations of the "ultra-liberal", "ultra-law-and-order" right, it's an acknowledged fact that the only divergences between all the political parties (as within the Socialist Party itself) are divergences about the mode and agenda of enforcement of the austerity measures. This opposition showbiz politics is obviously supported by the left big union confederations that started a cycle of days of "national mobilisation" against the retirement policy of Sarkozy's government.

Since October 12<sup>th</sup>, in addition of these inoffensive parades, some movements of blockade in refineries<sup>3</sup>, fuel depots, and more upstream, in oil terminals<sup>4</sup>, take place and attack directly the very vigour of merchant flows and production. As well as the proper distribution of finished articles, it's indeed the production itself that today entirely depends on the transportation since it almost completely uses just-in-time methods (to avoid at the most expenses connected with the immobilization of raw materials, spare parts, finished articles, etc.), without counting that oil is also one of the essential raw materials in several key industries in Western Europe, as for example chemical indus-

try. The general evolution of the industrial configuration thus incontestably increased the nuisance power of the refineries' blockade.

Generally speaking, reactions of governments to the blockade of production and distribution energizing centres (e.g. gasworks, power stations, oil depots or refineries and since a half century, nuclear power stations<sup>5</sup>) are enough to reveal their strategic importance. During all the social movements of a certain extent, the energizing facilities were historically always the object of surveillance and particular attention from the State, very conscious that attacks on these sectors by proletarians in struggle can establish a balance of forces extensively favourable to these latter.



*Blockade of a fuel depot in Dijon – November 2<sup>nd</sup>*

According to journalistic sources the available oil reserves in France allow to satisfy the energizing needs of its economy during hardly ten days.<sup>6</sup> Certainly, the abroad supplying in refined oil products can allow to

<sup>3</sup> October 22<sup>nd</sup>, Total must recognize that all its refineries are blocked.

<sup>4</sup> The oil terminal in Fos (Bouches-du-Rhône) started the movement early October, then followed by those of Le Havre (Seine-Maritime) and Donges (Loire-Atlantique). In Fos and Marseille, many ships (60 only in Fos on October 22<sup>nd</sup>), among which several dozens of tankers remain in harbour waiting for an unloading. Some of them will be rerouted towards the harbour of Antwerp, allowing Nicolas Sarkozy full of bitterness to say: "I'm sorry that Antwerp became the second French harbour." He will be even sorrier the day when the movement will also reach Antwerp...

<sup>5</sup> It's a taboo subject, because we didn't see anywhere, at the top of the disruptions in fossil fuel oils supplying, touching on these preserved energizing sanctuaries that are the nuclear power stations...

<sup>6</sup> There would be in fact three levels of fuel reserves, the first one serving as a buffer for the general consumption in normal situation; it's possible to dip into both other levels in order to compensate for a supplying crisis, according to its size and length. The passage from one level to another is of course accompanied by consumption restrictions, according to economic and strategic priorities of the State, which also obviously possesses, as a good father should, military stocks to supply the repression forces.

temporarily get round the effects of a strike in the refineries (although it generates *de facto* an higher cost for the industry that is thus attacked in any way) but nevertheless there's a need that the storage depots and infrastructures of the oil transportation are not blocked.



Hence the importance of the extension of blockades, all over France, towards the infrastructures of transportation and refined oil products storage. In this context, whereas some fuel transportation companies send their trucks to get supplies abroad, and among others in refineries of Feluy and Tertre, in Belgium, the blockade of these by their workers constitutes a strong act of international solidarity.<sup>7</sup> In the same way, on Monday October 25<sup>th</sup>, some strikers of the Basque country (Spain) blocked the border post of Biriatou and immobilized all the trucks that tried to bring fuel in France.

A last element could intervene in the fact that blockades to struggle against the retirement reform precisely started in refineries; it's the even vivid memory of the last strike in this sector. It was in February 2010, and it quickly led to a shortage of fuel in France and thus forced the government to

<sup>7</sup> And this, even though the unions, that could not disavow the action, managed so that it didn't continue more than one day.

directly intercede by the Total group so that it promised that no refinery would be closed before 2015. The fact that the oil sector has been explicitly referred to in autumn as the strategic sector 'where to start' is certainly not extraneous to this result that was gotten some months earlier.

*"It is necessary to block the economy, how to do it? The answer imposed from itself around the question of oil. Even though no one finally knows if it will work, if it is the right way how to attack this problem, there is this attempt: to organize the shortage of petrol. And to see what will happen."* (Excerpt from the bulletin "First Round", last week of October 2010).

Beyond the simple withdrawal of the retirement reform, what's here decisive is incontestably the institution of a balance of forces about all the austerity measures to come, what explains that the government could not give up on basis of the sole blockade of the oil sector, what would have constituted a real confession of weakness from its part. Therefore it didn't have the choice to harden the trial of strength with the strikers and it decided to purely and simply requisition workers according to territorial exception laws (which have been reinforced these last years), with the threatening for whom refusing to be sentenced to five years of jail and to get a €10,000 fine...



*"Community of interests": Advertisement of the Total group*

This measure will directly have for result to stir much more the anger of the most combative elements of the movement who will react while spreading blockades to other targets, all explicitly connected with the commodities' circulation. Some groups composed of various profession workers, unemployed, high school students, etc. thus start blocking main roads, trucking companies, logistical platforms (distribution), bus depots, post office services, shopping malls,

railway stations and railways, harbours, airports, incinerators and bin lorries garages and cleaning trucks, etc. In this movement proletarians behave like “Bisons futés”<sup>8</sup> against the grain and sketch an original cartography, that of France of the best investments concerning hindrance to business. On October 25<sup>th</sup>, 200 proletarians block the access roundabouts to the enormous industrial complex of the “Française de Mécanique” (FM), subsidiary company of Renault and Peugeot groups that produces the twentieth part of the motors all over the planet.



Site of the “Française de Mécanique” (FM)

As the flying pickets, it’s here about a manner to get round sanctions, intimidations and requisitions the strikers are subjected to from the State and employers, but it’s also about a considerable rupture with the union strategy of the partitioning (which is the allied of open repression) that recognizes a legitimacy only to the blockades led by strikers in their own factory and not to those made from outside. The repression thus prompts to right answers that consolidate the movement, pushing to struggle against personalisation, isolation, division into sectors, professions, etc.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> “Bison futé”: traffic monitoring service that informs drivers about congestion on French roads and suggests alternative routes.

<sup>9</sup> “One can only be delighted with these moments of struggle” declared in November 2007 a leaflet signed by “the hostages takers of Grenoble university campus” about the struggles led in France in 2007 by railway workers, high school students, students, workers of EDF, fishermen, in the suburbs, etc. But these comrades also developed some criticism: “one speaks about convergence in the struggles, but actually everybody struggles in his own sector”, and to

**The cost of September and October strikes would amount to 4 billion of €, according to the employers**

“99% of the country’s domestic needs are provided by the road. Hindrances that we met in our work had obviously some catastrophic consequences. [...] We obviously had difficulties to re-fuel our trucks and therefore to meet our customers’ demands. With the consequence that local economic fabric suffers from that. We also lost a lot in productivity, with pending drivers but always paid at 100%. Some transport SMEs had to resort to short-time working.” (Jérôme Bessière – “National Federation of Road Transport”)

“Social movements which led to the closing of French refineries and the blockade of harbours cost in total between 200 and 300 millions of € to oil industry.” (according to the paper “Les Echos”).

Jean-Louis Schilansky, president of the “French Union of Oil Industries” (Ufip), explains that the first item of costs was the immobilization of ships off the terminals. “An immobilized ship represents a cost between 30,000 and 50,000 dollars per day”, he explains.

The second item of costs is that of refineries whose stopping costs between 500,000 and 1 million of € per day.

Finally, the third item of expenses is that of logistical extra costs linked to the routing and transportation of fuel. “France had to import until 100,000 tons of fuel, domestic fuel or diesel oil each day”, the newspaper explains, to “25,000 tons in normal time”.



Simultaneous blockades of several airports on November 4<sup>th</sup>

add that “when determination overrides resignation, the Sarkozy’s demagogic motto can become ours: together, everything becomes possible.” It’s indeed this tendency that affirms itself today, some years later, under the pressure of more generalized reforms.



Of course, whereas these blockades express better than any other evidence the strategic consolidating and the stepping up of the movement, the police, union and journalistic arithmeticians bombard us with their everlasting counting of those taking part in the circus processions, counting which political purpose is to divert our attention on class practices and to prepare the indispensable *general demobilization*. And Christophe Aguiton, “researcher” and militant of ATTAC went farther in reformist mediocrity: *“Any movement has its scorers, and for this one it’s clearly the demonstration. The strike, that was for long the classic mode of expression (let’s say from 1936 to 1968), has been supplanted since some years by the procession. Previously, the demo was not really well considered. It was for breakers, for steelworkers. Today, it reached a degree of legitimacy superior to the strike.”*

Onto the ground, some proletarians in struggle seem however very aware of the radical level of the struggle in which they get involved and the necessity to lead it to the end: *“no matter what the government says, it brazenly lies (about the number of demonstrators, strikers, dried-up petrol stations, incidents that break out, actions of blockades, etc.), and the present movement is increasing in scale –an historic scale– because of the number of people involved, because of the diversity of sectors mobilized in solidarity, because of the determination and radicalisation of people in struggle. The government decided to get through in force. The population is taking up the challenge. In this dispute, one of both camps should give up. The struggle promises to be long and harsh. We don’t have another choice than to go towards a total blockade of the country. The imminent vote of the law should not stop*

us...” (Excerpt from the editorial of the 1<sup>st</sup> issue of “Info-Luttes” – Caen, October 19<sup>th</sup> 2010).

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While looking back, it’s easy to see that if this movement took quickly this turn, it’s also that every category of participants already got some –long-standing and recent– scores to settle with the managers of all this wonderful civilized misery. Indeed the present law on the end of career has been preceded by innumerable restrictions, constraints, humiliations, but also by sometimes harsh struggles of which the smouldering fire was only revived here.

So the harbour sector was already galvanized into action because of a reform imposed at the European (and world) level, which will come into effect next January, involving a brutal “liberalization”, i.e. a depreciation of professional statuses, layoffs, exacerbation of the competition between workers in the division of labour and consequently a strong pressure to decrease the wages. Not only the costs of commodities transport will be reduced but also passing this reform aims at breaking the workers’ historic combativeness in this strategic sector.

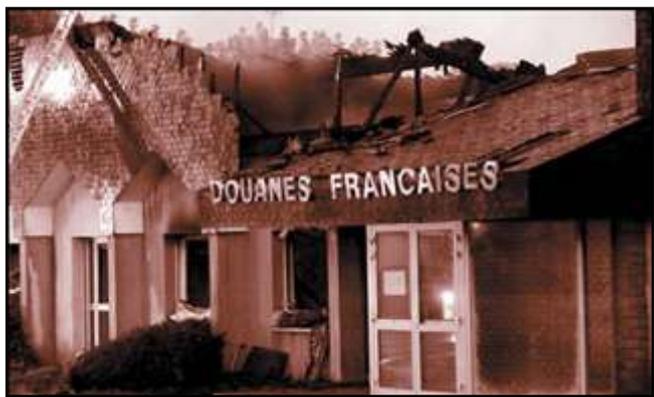
In the sector of fuel (refineries and depots), the promise to maintain the activity of all the Total sites in France, promise made to put an end to the strike of February 2010, proved to be a broken promise: indeed the main site (the *Refinery of Flanders*) has been nevertheless transformed in fuel depot, while the depot of Reichstett in Alsace could purely and simply be closed.

As for high school students (“lycéens”), who enter into the struggle from October 12<sup>th</sup> (and massively from October 14<sup>th</sup>), bringing thus a new and intergenerational breath to the movement while broadening it, it’s clear that their protest goes beyond the sole question of retirement, which concerns them somehow very far (and some years much more far at each governmental reform...). Here also the unrest is deeper, as it has been revealed by their struggle in 2006 “against the CPE”... and beyond.

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So the employers and the State accumulated against them a deep and wide discontent, revealed and catalysed at a certain

level of unification in the struggle by the “retirement reform”. This discontent didn’t feed on a particular fault that such or such attack, such or such reform would constitute (and that the socialists intend to adjust), but it’s about a more deeply-held rupture, a refusal of the fate reserved for us in this society, no matter the various statuses and social situations.



Rennes, October 20<sup>th</sup>



Headquarters of the MEDEF (the union of employers) in Narbonne, October 22<sup>nd</sup>



Paris, October 16<sup>th</sup>, spray-painted tags: “Cops, pigs, murderers”

### From the obvious fact of the blockade... to the radicalisation of the struggle in an autonomous way

During the second week of October, facing the ineffective union processions, the blockade of the economy becomes therefore to be essential and obvious to make the government give in. This strategic choice meant as well as favoured the autonomisation and radicalisation of the movement, and this at several levels.

The development of practices of blockade indeed *objectively* expresses an increased refusal of the ongoing bourgeois invitation to sacrifice ourselves for saving the economy in crisis in the name of the protection of “our competitiveness”, “employment” and “our social system” or even “stability of the euro zone”. Against the ordinary resignation (e.g. “In times of crisis you want to step up strike action? You’ll pay for that...”; “In times of crisis you want to block the economy? You will have to take layoffs upon yourself...”<sup>10</sup>), proletarians who practise the blockade prove themselves to be insolently determined to sacrifice on the contrary the running of national economy, and to act for the satisfaction of their human needs. As it’s very clearly pointed out in the bulletin of struggle “Premier Round”:

“Assuming to ‘block the economy’, it’s also assuming that there is no ‘national interest’, there is no reason to ‘be responsible and not deepen the crisis’. There is not ‘our’ economy that it would be necessary to protect, but there is the economy as an enemy.”



Place Bellecour in Lyon, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010

<sup>10</sup> Excerpt from the leaflet “Against exploitation, let’s block the economy!” published on the internet on October 10<sup>th</sup> and reproduced in appendix.

As soon as they enter into the movement, high school students energetically rejoin the dynamics of the blockades but they also start that of ransacking, looting, burning, etc. as they practically showed during the demonstrations of October 19<sup>th</sup>. In Lyon the Reuters agency talks about “*genuine scenes of urban guerrilla warfare*”, while the authorities speak about no less than “1,300 hooligans (‘*casseurs*’), *manoeuvring in small groups and in a very fast way in the main streets of the city*”. The riots take place in the flashy city centre and not in the suburbs anymore: windows of dozens of shops are broken, nine boutiques have been looted. According to the cops of GIPN<sup>11</sup> who have been sent there with armoured vehicles, “*the attacks were much more violent than during the riots of Villeneuve in Grenoble*”. In comparison with these facts, the 75 arrests announced that day are relatively “poor”.

“*One marks a nice difference with this social movement in comparison with its most recent precedents. The entry of the lycéens isn’t being accomplished in tranquil way: that’s the least one can say. The radicalisation isn’t lead by a minority for the sake of the movement [en fin de mouvement] but translates itself directly into acts, and even these are undertaken in a diffuse way. Reading the notices from one of the last few days gives us a precise, unequivocal indicator: they’re confronting the police, they smash, they burn, they sack etc, whether in the big towns or a little village. The contagion’s there, the machine’s getting going.*” (Excerpt from the text “*Le Front commun des casseurs*”<sup>12</sup>).

This development of direct action is backed up with the forming of “inter-pro assemblies” (for “inter-professional”), relatively bad named since in many places they gather workers without distinction of profession, as well as high school students and unemployed. These assemblies are the shapes of organization that the proletarians in struggle endow themselves with to *centralize and*

*coordinate* their actions and so to *answer to the needs* that the new direction taken by the movement sets out, since it goes beyond the pacific processions recommended by the big trade-unions.

Therefore, with all their contradictions and heterogeneities, we consider these “assemblies” as first formalisations of the tendency of our class to:

- become unified in the struggle and overcome divisions and partitioning imposed by the professional structuring of big trade-unions;
- develop its associationism and its autonomy against Social Democratic organizations that recommend “national days of action” reduced to simple sheep-like processions.

The inter-pro GA of Saint-Claude (in the Jura) points out in one of its declarations:

“*The very positive point is the takeover of this movement by the basis, by people who are not card-carrying, neither of parties, nor of unions, anyway, people who come only in their name. One also finds workers, who don’t want to leave off there, even if it means to act without their union. One notes the presence of unions, very forced to connect with wagons of an initiative that doesn’t issue from them... One doesn’t refuse anybody however that may be and the unionists who don’t want to blindly obey their unions are welcomed in the framework of the General assembly that we try to make live.*”

In the heart of this process of assemblies, initiatives didn’t stop increasing in order to endow the movement with material and financial resources allowing its perpetuation and extension. In many places appeared some “bulletins of struggle”<sup>13</sup>, autonomous strike’s funds –“caisses de grève”– (that are not constituted and managed anymore by

<sup>11</sup> GIPN: “*Groupe d’Intervention de la Police Nationale*”; special task force of the police, like SAS in the UK and SWAT in the USA.

<sup>12</sup> Text published on internet on October 20<sup>th</sup> we reproduce in appendix from the English translation published in “LIENS” #1 (documents from the current French revolt against austerity), November 2010, available on its blog: <http://liensjournal.wordpress.com>.

<sup>13</sup> Bulletins of struggle which were for us an important source of information. Let’s mention, on a national scale, “*Premier round*”, “*Les mauvais jours finiront*”, “*G.A.V.*”, and on a local scale, “*Info-Luttés*” in Caen, “*Chabé en lute*” in Chambéry, “*Inter luttants*” in Paris, “*Havre de grève*” in Le Havre, “*La Riposte*” in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais, etc. On internet, let’s mention the dynamism of the blog <http://juralibertaire.over-blog.com>.

the union structures but well by those who take part in the movement themselves), free meals, etc. In Rennes, on October 27<sup>th</sup>, the inter-pro assembly occupied the old building of the CFDT and transformed it into “strike centre at the service of the popular struggles”<sup>14</sup>.

**“No eviction for the Strike Centre!”**

The Inter-professional General Assembly in Rennes occupied on Wednesday October 27<sup>th</sup> a place called “strike centre” (“maison de la grève”) to make lasting longer the antagonistic experience of strike and economic blockade aiming to oppose the reform of retirement system.

To allow the most people to take part in the struggle, to build up solidarities, to conquer new rights, we requisitioned this place and want it to be at the service of the popular struggle.

This place belongs to the municipality of Rennes; therefore it belongs to the inhabitants of Rennes.

We think that in a city where the municipal majority is preoccupied to give the city over to speculators, luxury hoteliers and other worshippers of business convention centres, we only tried to intervene somehow in the balance.

In the past the town council answered scornfully or in a repressive way to the demands of places allocation for the popular struggle.

We invite the inhabitants of Rennes, especially those who are involved in collectives, parties, unions, associations taking part to the struggles against social regressions like the retirements reform, to take a stand and inform the town council about their wish to see our place lasting longer and their refusal of all repressive answer towards our initiative.

To the most motivated among them we wish to repeat that the struggle, strikes and actions of blockade continue and that our door is wide open.

**LONG LIVE THE STRIKE!!!**

<sup>14</sup> The town council of course hastened to explain that the old building of the CFDT had to be refitted “in order to put up there the association of protection of children [and] the Puzzle, the day facilities for homeless”. It’s the usual story of charity alibi towards “the poorest”. The occupiers of the strike centre (called “Maison de la grève”) don’t make any mistake and declare that “this project was pulled out of the hat, to legitimize our eviction”.

With regard to the strike’s funds, it’s necessary to emphasize the emergence of self-financing practices, which are not separated from conflicting action: some operations “péages gratuits” (“free toll”) are thus organized, which consist in lifting the tollgates while inviting the drivers to contribute in supporting strikers. The purpose of these actions is to make pay for strike costs not only the workers and sympathizers anymore, but also the State, because the money given to strikers by drivers has normally to end up in the coffers of the motorway network managers... These operations of “free toll” have moreover the advantage to increase the sympathy of motorways users (who for once are not submitted to the toll racket) towards the movement. Anyway no media dared to start singing about these operations the classical media chant of “the population being held hostage”... Similarly on Friday October 29<sup>th</sup>, about fifty people interrupted the smooth running of the university restaurant in the rue de Tolbiac (Paris, 13<sup>th</sup> arrondissement) to distribute meals for free and to put money into strike’s funds.



A bulletin of struggle among others... that of the GA in Caen

## Strike's Fund.

Here and there, from Montpellier to St Nazaire or Paris, blossom embryos of creative strike's fund (*caisse de grève*). They are not delimited anymore to corporation engaged in the strike and their use surrendered to unions structures, whose specialty is to maintain a opacity on their use. A new horizon is emerging: that one being reinforcing the practical means of blockage. Strike's funds for all town, supported by assemblies of students, unemployed, and all those who are defending the strike, which purpose would be to the compensate for financial loss of employed strikers on key sectors (trains, refineries,...), or to take care of judiciary costs in case of arrests. With the promise within itself that the movement goes beyond the question of pensions. It is necessary to find means to make the strike lasts. So that the strike, on its duration and its form, becomes then the affair of people who are participating in. From that can emerge and get invented new communal practices, relation to time and world, more desirable than the individual comfort awe are asked to run after.

A space is opening up, let's dwell in it.<sup>15</sup>

*Bulletin "Rebetiko", October 18<sup>th</sup> 2010*

### Let's create strike's funds

The movement promising to be quite long, the idea emerges to create strike's funds. In various schools of the town for example some strike's funds are organized to help those who have the lowest wage to withstand the financial weight of strike days. Such strike's funds can be increased in various sectors particularly those that entered the first into renewable strike.

Demonstrations, roadblocks, handing out leaflets, strike pickets can be opportunities to collect a little money. Concerts of support can also be organized. In the same way operations "free toll" with leaflets for popularizing the struggle movement can be quickly considered.

*"Info-Luttes", n°1, Caen, October 19th 2010*

In its actions and doings, as in its organization, the movement thus took a progressively more territorial and more autonomous character, the workers of various sectors getting directly organized themselves, determining their actions, not individually anymore in each factory but collectively, with unemployed and high school students, and with the obvious purpose to prevent the smooth running of business. The agility and

<sup>15</sup> From the English translation published on the blog: <http://liensjournal.wordpress.com>.

mobility clearly show their superiority upon the abnegation to lay siege to such factory, such building, such crossroads or rail junctions: one will avoid direct confrontation, and the infrastructures, returned to their productive normality by the police brutal intervention, are blocked again once these police leave.

Finally, and it's not of lesser importance for the process of autonomisation of the movement, these practices were accompanied by a impressive proliferation of written expressions (leaflets, banners, tags, bulletins of struggle, texts of analysis, etc.) that express at different levels the deep nature of this movement: i.e. to be the movement of negation, of abolition of the existing social order, to be the bearer of *the destruction of what destroys us*.

### CALL TO FINANCIAL SOLIDARITY TOWARDS SECTORS IN STRUGGLE

Since several weeks, in many sectors, salaried workers are mobilized notably against the retirement reform. The fact to go on renewable strike allows creating a balance of forces, but it's expensive. We indeed realize that not everyone is fortunate enough to go on renewable strike.

However, there are other means to maintain the balance of forces while supporting financially and concretely the strikers. The constitution of solidarity funds allows many social and wage advances, as well as maintaining these poles of protest. These funds already exist in sectors like railways and petro-chemistry, strategic and crucial sectors allowing a large and efficient movement.

The money we collected today will therefore be pay fully back into strike's funds of railway workers in Caen and refineries workers in Le Havre in struggle since the beginning of this mobilization.

THE HAND IN THE POCKET IF NOT BEING  
HAND IN HAND.

Students' GA in Caen.

*Leaflet handed out to drivers during the operation "free toll" in Dozulé (Calvados) on November 1<sup>st</sup>*

Let's mention among these writings "*From movementism to the autonomisation of the struggles: a draft of practical reflection*" (text in two parts at the moment we finish this

article) that affirms thus very clearly *“that, no, we are not there for negotiating, that we are not there for the media, but that when we go in demo, we will organize pickets, make actions, that is an act of war. War against the State. War against Capital. War against the trade-unions. [...] The word is turning, it reappropriates itself, it expresses itself quite openly: the State, police, trade-unions, wage relation, capitalism, are fundamentally ENEMIES. With all the consequences about”*. Farther, the text continues: *“the retirement reform will already lead to another, the reform of the Social Security and the program of austerity, therefore we don’t have any more to fight some partial reforms but the very logic and system that allow these reforms.”*

In the practical perspective to break the union “movementism” which renders the struggle powerless, which makes it breathless and exhausts it, this text has something strong: it also puts the question of *how going on?*, *how going farther?*, while talking about the necessity among others:

- to impose a temporality of struggle peculiar to the movement (and not anymore decided by the trade-unions);
- to develop always further the offensive action, organized and coordinated in an autonomous way: the authors of the text thus emphasize the initiative of the constitution of a *“national and autonomous coordination to get round the trade-unions’ mottos, whose first meeting took place in Tours on November 6<sup>th</sup>”* and of which we reproduce the call in a box on next page;
- to *“go through a necessary movement of occupations”*, directly referring thus to *“the elements of the teachers’ great social movement of Oaxaca in Mexico that resulted in the great popular insurrection of all the South-Mexico: permanent occupation of a square in the city, occupation and creation of several radios of struggle, reappropriation of local and national television channels; general strike through total local economic blockade; paralysis of the means of communication of the State and repression forces through occupation-reappropriation; etc.”*

These expressions are certainly still a minority, bore by the most advanced elements of the movement, who were for most of them politicized already before, but they are not at

all separated from the movement, they *organically* develop with the radicalisation of the movement itself.

Strata of social peace and the confiscation by Marxism-Leninism (and its several manifestations) of the very words with which we perceive our own social reality still deprive today a lot of proletarians in struggle to recognize themselves as a class in struggle for the abolition of all class society. They consider themselves often as aggregates of individuals –naturalized in this condition of free individuals, and historic product– who in their “free will” bind themselves in networks on a circumstantial and “affinitarian” basis. Even if this ideological limit is not yet considerably overcome, we consider that on many aspects the present movement reaffirms in its practices (more than in its words, until now) the existence of a community of struggle against the State and all its factions, the existence of a class common interest, which is instinctively opposed to this very class condition, gathering workers, unemployed, high school students, etc. beyond their statuses and particular situations, while being under work’s and exploitation’s rule. We insist on the fact that beyond the words used, it’s the development of the movement itself that imposes to *take sides there always more distinctly and to get organized as a party*, either for the party of order and economy or for the party of the *uncompromising and non-negotiable* affirmation of our needs.



*“Against exploitation, let’s block the economy!”*

## **Call to the national meeting in Tours on November 6<sup>th</sup>**

On November 6<sup>th</sup> in Tours gathered the elected or observer delegates of 25 inter-professional General Assemblies (GA), struggle's GA, inter-union GA open to non-unionized, collectives, inter-sectors coordination, etc. from Laval, Le Havre, Angers, Béziers, Saint-Étienne, Roanne, Chambéry, Nantes, Angoulême, Cognac, Bayonne, Chinon, Nîmes, Tours, Saint-Dennis, Rouen, Champigny, Paris-Est, Paris-Centre, Paris 5<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup>, Paris 20<sup>th</sup>, Vannes, Lille, Grenoble and Nancy (cities of Aubenas, Agen, Brest, Rennes, Montpellier and Sarlat are excused).

Workers of public and private sectors, unemployed, retired people, high school students and students massively mobilized through strike, demonstration and actions of blockade for the withdrawal of the retirement reform, with the support of the majority of the population. Yet, the power answered only scornfully, through disinformation, repression, offense against the right of strike, and it decides to go through in force.

The struggle against the retirement reform reaches a turning point. Whereas the government and most of the media announce since weeks the end of the mobilization, actions of blockade and solidarity are led all over the country and demonstrations are still massive. This law must be abrogated. We refuse the end of the movement after the vote of the law.

The strategy of the inter-union association was a failure for workers. But time is not for resignation: we are determined to continue the fight. In many localities, those who struggle, unionized in various organizations and non-unionized, met in General assemblies and collectives to think and act together: to inform, to support sectors in struggle, to spread renewable strike, to organize actions of blockade. We want that this dynamics of self-organization and common action perpetuates itself, develop and get coordinated.

This movement lies within a larger perspective to give a death blow to the government's and employers' policies, which prepare news attacks, notably on health insurance. We remain convinced that the only means to win against the government is the blockade of the economy and the general strike.

We call to stand up against the repression that hits more and more brutally those who take part in the social movement.

We held this national meeting to begin to discuss between each others, to coordinate and to lead some common actions.

We call those who struggle to meet into General assemblies, if there are not yet in their locality.

We call all inter-professional GA, struggle's GA, inter-union GA open to non-unionized, etc. to take part in the next national meeting in Nantes on Saturday November 27<sup>th</sup> 2010, while sending of elected delegates.

We invite the union organizations to send observers to this meeting.

We call to the following actions, in order to consolidate the actions of all kinds that take place daily:

- A symbolic action on November 11<sup>th</sup> at 11am for the abrogation of the law project and in homage to deaths at work before retirement;
- An action day of economic blockade on November 15<sup>th</sup>, for which we call to international support;
- A symbolic action consisting in burning the text of law the day of its enactment.

**The struggle is anti-capitalist.**

**The war is social and total.**

**We won't give up anything, we will take all.**

**Let's dare the offensive, through and for the unlimited general strike, through and for the movement of occupations, through and for the liberation in an autonomous way of the grass roots in struggle.**



**The left against proletarian violence... and vice versa!**

In 2006, high school students and students had already practised some blockades in addition of the strike and occupation of their schools and faculties, but in demonstrations the prevailing pacifism had allowed the State to isolate –as an ideological representation– a subject called “casseur” (rioter) and to put it into the same category as the subject “youngster of the suburbs”. At the time, the obsession of the recent riots of 2005 and a possible junction with the “anti-CPE” movement (and beyond) had been explicitly evoked by the Minister of the Interior Nicolas Sarkozy, elected president recently.

Today, without reaching the level of suburbs conflagration in 2005, it’s important to underline that radical modes of action (wild demos, ransacking, looting, arsons, direct actions led by very mobile small groups, etc.) have also been adopted by high school students during the demonstrations:

*“In the crushing majority of the cases, vandals are not external to the protest movement, a senior official explains. It’s first about high school students themselves, or even hardly 12-year-old schoolboys.” “In the demonstrations, a police officer also declares in the Essonne (Ile-de-France), high school students and schoolboys coming from tough districts turn into rioters. They put their hood and begin to throw stones on us or to set fire to dust-bins, or even to cars, and then they come back melting into the crowd, some of them changing their clothes with each others to not be recognized on videotapes shot by our departments.”<sup>16</sup>*

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in “Le Figaro” of October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

The cop-in-chief Sarkozy is obviously fully aware of all this when he declares at the same time, for the sole purpose of doing a propagandist caricature, that the authors of violence “*have nothing to do with those who protest honestly*”. In spite of such same old story, it becomes always more complicated for the State to uphold without flagrant incoherence that all violent practice would be the fact of external elements to the movement, in order not to have to recognize this violence as what it is: i.e. the direct product of oppression and social contradictions.<sup>17</sup>

*“As usual, they come with the same old story of the “casseurs” (rioters). But, last Tuesday, you should see the face of the rioters on place Bellecour [in Lyon], in the heat of the clashes with the police: youngsters and old folks, the truck of the CGT Vinatier, in the middle of teargas, its occupants staying there despite all the obstacles, railway workers starting to burn pallets, like while picketing... High school students that day, they were at the head of the procession, arrived opportunely on Albert Thomas Avenue. The battle that followed, taken in the mess of the big demonstration, necessarily led to some crazy gestures, gestures that make that the same person who tries some minutes earlier to calm down the situation starts suddenly throwing stones... Who is the “casseur”? Who becomes suddenly?”*

*Excerpt from the bulletin “Premier Round”, last week of October 2010*

<sup>17</sup> The same ideological method prevails in the ongoing antiterrorist campaign of the State: according to its official speech terrorism would be the evil, the virus attacking from the outside a healthy social body and that it would be important to eradicate as Pasteur’s medicine pretends to do with “the diseases”. The State is actually subtler and knows that concerning counterinsurgency one doesn’t make anything if one doesn’t challenge the (back)-ground.

### Repression & solidarity...

On October 22<sup>nd</sup>, there were already 2,257 of arrests, of which 1,677 in police custody, since October 12<sup>th</sup>. And 72 cops injured! Solidarity with the accused is essential: one can go before the police station then the court to support buddies and help the lawyer in his work; one can also get organized to find money to pay for fines or postal orders for those who will stay some months behind bars... In Paris there is for example the solidarity fund Kaliméro to pay postal orders: [kalimeroparis@riseup.net](mailto:kalimeroparis@riseup.net)

However, as sectors partitioning disappear in the struggle (partitioning that the State uses to divide us), it turns out all the more vital for it to maintain a firm quarantine line around all the more determined proletarians who practise direct action. This quarantine line is not embodied only in the ranks of CRS<sup>18</sup> or judges who give particularly stiff sentences<sup>19</sup>, but also in an ideological war whose issue consists in sowing confusion and making from violence a question separated from the struggle<sup>20</sup>. It's there that the Social Democrat forces (parties, unions...) intervene in a determining way, distilling their calls to dissociate ourselves from these

<sup>18</sup> CRS: "*Compagnie Républicaine de Sécurité*". Anti-riot brigades' item of protective gear, which appeared not so long like a futuristic prototype (the "Robocop"), is today the war standard deployed at the slightest disturbance of the peace, in addition to which there are all the most vicious developments of weapons for controlling crowds (variously aggressive, irritating, vomiting, disabling gas, deafening grenades, flash-balls, teasers, pump-action shotguns...) that regularly mutilate people through a systematically disrespectful use of the hypocrite "legal action": flat trajectory fires and proximity shootings, etc.

<sup>19</sup> Let's symbolically mention the case of a 16-year-old teenager sentenced to one year's imprisonment under the accusation of throwing stones against policemen.

<sup>20</sup> "*That is the real difference: the quarantine lines that the bourgeoisie endeavours to impose everywhere in order to divide the proletariat. On one hand, the politically correct protests, the legal stoppages of work, the flock of sheep-like marches and pseudo-protests; on the other hand, the 'riots' from uncontrolled elements.*" (as we wrote in the text "*Capitalist catastrophe and proletarian struggles*", in "*Communism*" No.15, July 2010)

practices, to denounce on the ground those who take part in them.

However, to keep law and order (and to act as a police force) in demonstrations, to ostracize the more radical proletarians *for what they are* –sometimes while directly handing them over to cops– can always backfire on union teams of stewards because of the sympathy that these proletarians win within the movement.

### Plain-clothes cops & Team of stewards...

If the trade-unions are the political enemies of the struggle (negotiation and co-management with the employers, minimalist demands, pyramidal and ultra-hierarchical structure), their Teams of stewards ["Services d'Ordre" = "SO"] are the direct enemies of demonstrators. With truncheons, gas-spray, leaden gloves, the "SO" physically attack all those who don't demonstrate submissively as the unions would like: coordinated with the cops, they beat up and arrest the too much unruly high school students; they contain and prevent those who would prefer to start a wild demonstration, etc.

Plain-clothes cops are also swarming: they often move silently by group of 10-15, with the truncheon hidden in their back. They are neither demonstrators nor rioters. They are more and more present in the processions so that each doesn't know anymore who the cop is, who the comrade is: a kind of containment and psychological pressure on the demo... Plain-clothes cops as well as "SO" don't have anything to do in our demonstrations, it would be necessary to get organized to kick out them...

(Excerpt from "*En grève jusqu'à la retraite!*" ["*On strike until the retirement!*"], paper of struggle against Capital and against the State, November 5<sup>th</sup> 2010)

In addition to this range of repression measures there is a very nasty confusion ("amalgam") that deserves some attention; it's that putting violent action in the same category as "police provocation". Facing the present movement in France the left thus promoted in a very strong zealous way the figure of "policeman-rioter". This figure is based on the reality of an indeed reinforced presence of plain-clothes cops in the dem-

onstrations<sup>21</sup>, presence about which the left can offer a show of disapproval, while continuing of course to collaborate with the police.

*“The CGT appeals salaried workers, strikers for vigilance because of the presence of provocateurs in the union initiatives. They encourage to violent acts likely in return to fuel police repression and discredit the struggle.”*

National communiqué of the CGT, October 22<sup>nd</sup>  
*“It’s our responsibility to issue an appeal for calm. Let’s not yield to provocation. The youth in the street, this is not violence.”*

François Chérèque, General Secretary of the union CFDT

*“Be vigilant, don’t break anything.”*

FIDL (one of the “lycéens” union)

*“We don’t support any of the acts committed today [in a high school of Carcassonne]. Damages were done by people from outside of the schools and by hooligans we never seen in our demonstrations. Following today’s events, we decided to cooperate with the police so that our demonstrations and our blockades stay peaceful.”*

Victor Chabert, UNL representative (“Union Nationale Lycéenne”), Monday November 8<sup>th</sup>

*“Those who throw stones, set alight, break shop windows are sarkozyst militants, they maybe aren’t card-carrying members [...] but the one and only person to whom they are of use is the president Sarkozy. We are absolutely disgusted by these people.”*

Jean-Luc Mélenchon, president of the Left Party, on October 21<sup>st</sup>

The manoeuvre is cleverer than it can appear at first sight: it is here about pretending to side with (to stand up for) *the whole* of the movement, *against the police*. While depicting the police as the very embodiment of the agent inoculating the movement with violence from the outside, the effective tendency among proletarians in struggle to resort increasingly to direct action, violence,

<sup>21</sup> In France the police’s corps intervening only dressed in plain clothes is the BAC (“Brigades Anti-Criminalité”), that infiltrate demonstrations, contain their surroundings and also patrol daily in “tough” districts.

and destruction, is thus fully discredited and considered as being a police manoeuvre. The lesser the police division between “honest demonstrators” and “rioters” prove to be effective on the ground, the more the left applies itself to restoring this figure of “rioter” in the negative, while putting it in the same category as that the indeed detested cop, all the more the plain-clothes cop. Once again the left performs conjuring tricks and assumes here its work as a police force, spreading a mood of confusion, disorientation, bewilderment, paranoia, paralysis to prevent the necessity to go through with levels of more violent action against the State.

Here’s well and truly the *Party of Order* at work, in an admirable division of labour that very clearly mobilizes all its tendencies, all its “rivals” on “the political scene”. Thanks to that we spare our time and energy because we don’t have to sort out all these “different” factions...

We would like to remind and denounce once again this typical manoeuvre of the left: indeed when the former Italian president Cossiga advocated to “*infiltrate the movement with agents provocateurs ready for anything*”<sup>22</sup>, the leftist Besancenot (currently spokesman of the NPA, “*New ‘Anti-capitalist’ Party*”), took over this declaration to confirm his condemnation of violence in demonstrations as being the fact of cops.

*“The falsification is obvious, we wrote: Cossiga doesn’t indeed say that the minority and radical violence is a product of the State but he explains the tactics to confront it. [...] Let’s not be mistaken about those who throw stones or Molotov cocktails against the centres of power and repression, those who loot the big shopping malls, those who paralyze the production and supplying of commodities during their struggle against the power, THESE ARE NOT PROVOCATEURS, on the contrary, these are our class brothers and sisters, our comrades. The provocateurs (usually cops disguised as demonstrators) are on the contrary those who in our demonstrations try to put a brake on violence against the bourgeoisie, those who try to repress our direct action. They infiltrate dem-*

<sup>22</sup> See our article “*Strategy of State’s Terror: Repress them all and send them all to hospital!*”, not yet published in our review in English.

onstrations to disorganize and disorientate them, they push them to attack some targets, which completely discredit our class strength, in particular the immigrant minorities or considered ethnically as different, or to destroy other proletarians' goods."

On the same issue, the text "Le Front commun des casseurs"<sup>23</sup> answers in a very direct way: "A note to the democratic conspiracy theorists: comrades, in order no longer to have any doubts whether or not there are cop-provocateurs who bust shop windows and commit all sorts of violent acts, notably around the Parisian black blocs, next time get your hands on an iron bar and bust it first. It's the only shock therapy which you have available. Other than that you can still rejoin the ranks of the SO or, further afield, those militant Stalinists forming up. But pay attention, you're going to get one bang in the face, because even if we know that the SO don't have cops embedded in their ranks (oh shit, yeah, there are sectoral branches of cops and prison guards in a fair few union) we also know that those guys have cops well-embedded in their heads. So they'll be treated as such. Pigs to slaughter."

### A spectre haunts the world...

In its very practices of blockading, the movement of autumn 2010 in France de facto sends back to the face of the economy its moralistic sermons. And, refusing to sacrifice itself for the economy, the movement intends actually to attack it in its nerve centres to reverse the balance of forces in favour of the struggle, to put forward the human needs against those of Capital. The present movement distinguishes itself in terms of overcoming of sectors partitioning, self-organization and contamination of targeted practices against the economy and the State (quantitatively prejudicial for these ones, at the rate of four billion of euros according to the employers' figures).

In terms of limits of the movement, let's straightaway avoid the pseudo distinction between the "internal" limits of the movement, the limits that it "would impose to itself" because of its "own weaknesses", and the "external" limits, that "would have been

imposed on it" through force, either physically or ideologically.

The movement of negation of the existing conditions is a product of these ones. Even though this movement of negation is precisely what is irreducible to these existing conditions, that cannot be integrated and absorbed to them, it is born on the very soil of these conditions, in a given world balance of forces, and it still reproduces features and ideologies of this society.



It is therefore never pure, free from contradictions, oppositions, illusions, etc. These ones always cross it and it will necessarily have, during its development, to make choices (programmatic, strategic, technical, material ones, etc.) that are maybe not shared by all. Sometimes these decisions will be essential by themselves; sometimes they will lead to the important internal struggles.

The limits of a movement also point out the perspectives of future development of everything that is potentially contained in there

<sup>23</sup> See the full text in appendix.



# Appendix

## **Against exploitation, let's block the economy!**

*"In times of crisis you want to step up strike action? You'll pay for that..."*

Union leadership, employers and right-wing as well as left-wing governments, share the same sense of responsibility. In the name of "economic realism", we should accept the necessity of an always harder exploitation. This is the ideological weapon systematically used against whoever rebels against this system.

*"In times of crisis you want to block the economy? You will have to take layoffs upon yourself..."*

In the name of this kind of false obvious facts, some union leadership don't even ask that the reform be withdrawn. Others, for tactical reasons, ask for the withdrawal, but refuse to give themselves the means through a real balance of forces: through the general strike, blocking, sabotaging, etc. The unions, which pretend to speak in the name of the workers, have a function: to manage jointly this class society through negotiation and mediation.

Today, the unions are in the forefront and they try by all means to control and to contain the protest, while monopolizing the broad lines of the workers' demands. The main issue is to prevent a stepping up of the struggle: each communiqué of Chérèque and Thibault mentions their fear about the disputes to race out of control.

Indeed, there are many workers who spend their life while working themselves to death for the bosses and who don't want to fight only to preserve the remnants left by the bourgeois. There are also many who are not concerned directly by the reform: RMIsts and unemployed, contract workers, casual workers, undocumented, "lycéens", and students to whom the labour market won't allow to contribute the necessary years, pensioners getting a starvation pension, etc. All these nevertheless certainly intend to take part to the burgeoning movement. We are many to wait from a social movement more than an adjustment of an umpteenth law, or even its withdrawal. We are many to want that a real balance of forces is established beyond the sham strikes that materialize with the processions in the street between "Republic" and "Nation".

Since the beginning of the mobilizations, whereas the media persist in wretchedly keeping on repeating and drawing up columns of figures, a certain number of initiatives flourish through the country in margin of the "Unitarian marches".

So, during the previous day of strike, on September the 23<sup>rd</sup>:

In Amiens, the salaried of the North industrial zone block their workplace all the day long, whereas go-slows are organized in the entire region.

In the region of Nantes, workers block the roads while demonstrators wall in the UMP office of Basse-Goulaine.

Around Chôlet, the Struggle Committee for the Pensions (CLR) organizes an operation free toll on the motorway A87.

In Saint-Nazaire furious demonstrators violently clash with the police.

This same week of September the 23<sup>rd</sup>, in Marseille, several movements of renewable strike are launched: canteens, cashiers of supermarkets, etc.

In Fos-sur-Mer oil terminal agents are in strike since two weeks. They have been joined since October the 7<sup>th</sup> by Dockers and Dockers' port agents.

On October the 1<sup>st</sup>, anaesthetist nursing staff blocks the Champs Elysées.



## Le Front commun des casseurs

*There's a discussion of some of the jargon of the current French movement in the Glossary on the back of this journal, including short accounts of the 'casseur' ('hooligan') and 'lycéen' ('high-school student'), which have been left untranslated in the following, which is written (incidentally) by a small French anarchist theory group "electron libre". It's been a relatively prominent effort to deal with an important tension in the past few weeks in France. Much to criticise, especially once the rhetoric gets going. It's invited. It stays interesting for us in the UK thinking about delegitimation. [introduction from "LIENS"]*

It's not unreasonable to offer a small preamble: the form's not the essence. So there's no question here of idealizing the practices for whatever they may be 'in themselves', but to see them in an utterly particular context.

Violence isn't ever something to romanticize, to idealize. It's just necessary to every act of revolt, every slightest revolutionary effort. And not for anyone lead down through the filth of authoritarian strategies.

One marks a nice difference with this social movement in comparison with its most recent precedents. The entry of the lycéens isn't being accomplished in tranquil way: that's the least one can say. The radicalization isn't lead by a minority for the sake of the movement [en fin de mouvement] but translates itself directly into acts, and even these are undertaken in a diffuse way. Reading the notices from one of the last few days gives us a precise, unequivocal indicator: they're confronting the police, they smash, they burn, they sack etc, whether in the big towns or a little village. The contagion's there, the machine's getting going.

And it's there that a second specificity comes into play: the figure of the urban youth of November 2005 – who during the lycée movement of 2005 or during the anti-CPE movement of 2006 went on the demos but not, really, with the same end in mind as the demonstrators themselves (and, indeed, several "antagonisms" made themselves felt on that terrain) – are finding themselves this time on the same side of the barricades. A certain reconciliation is, in effect, underway. This isn't class unity, but it's a nice start to association. Which – the egg or the chicken – provoked it? That's not too interesting to know. What's sure is that two phenomena shall, from now on, reproduce themselves: the lycéen blockaders adopting more offensive strategies (or at minimum reactions); the urban youths, not all of whom are necessarily disciplined school-goers (it's not interesting to add nuance to or develop this point, it's not the basis of the argument) coming to join the blockade or its environs, to help out during/to take advantage of the confrontations and for that matter bring a few rocks ... and so it continues.

One meets with a series of acts of violence where even the media, no longer end up saying that the events are uniquely due to "infiltrated casseurs". And the teachers of lycées recognize with compassion that the casseurs are also their lycéens. Oh shit! the figure of the barbarian's coming apart. We come across interviews which didn't leave any doubt before but are always getting more explicit: sure, they don't want the pension reform; but at the same time they don't give a shit about it. It's also – and above all – a great pretext to throw up whatever's in one's stomach, which one ordinarily retains for the most part. And as certain lycéens say, that fol-

lows the movement. I start to break stuff or to chuck stones at the cops because the others do it. And there's no doubt that that's a fine act. Since in general the same guys disport themselves with much more docility towards the system (at school or more generally.) They break, in the end, a few of their own chains.

The significant difference here is that it's not a question of a chain of reactive, violent events after, for example, a police "blunder", as was perhaps the case in November 2005 or more recently in Greece. Rather, an opportunity has been seized. And even if one could say the same stuff (the famous tale of the 'pretext') when it's a question of reactive riots, one finds in this case a cute little specificity: that reactive outbreaks have more obvious reasons to try and confront the direct cause: the figure of the cop. Here, the cop isn't particularly the cause of the pension reform. Even if he disposes himself offensively/repressively during the movement, it isn't essentially for this, contrary to what the nice leftist democrats would have us think (the famous "police provocations"), that we want to fuck him up, him and his colleagues. It's a little personal vengeance for those who know the daily humiliations which put them in their place: those who protect capital, the State, those who put the bridle on us each day, those who were authorized to put us away in the past and to smash today's revolts. So it's altogether sensible that the first reaction on seeing them isn't to blow kisses or stage a sit-in in front of him, but to really go at it. The more people turn up, the better it'll be.

But let's not simply place the cop at the center of everything. (As a little aside, the union stewards should receive their own dose of the everyday...) The armed wing of capital should definitely get a smack in the face, but it certainly doesn't end there. There's stuff left over: what must be blown up, pillaged, what must be burnt. Every material thing which each day humiliates us in our efforts to live, all the frustrations and one way streets which this fucking society offers have to take a few blows, get sent flying (which may only mean that we should have an immediate and pragmatic spirit, and line our pockets.)

In the current state of things it makes no sense to mark out what could serve effectively or not for anything. A busted shop window or a burnt out car have never changed anything and won't change anything such as it is, that's for sure. One could justifiably say that these last days give indicators for tomorrow, be it in this movement or another. More and more people have nothing to lose and more to gain from seeing the world smashed. When the majority of these people take to the streets they will set to committing a series of actions with no return. When it's no longer 10 but 1000 windows put in, simultaneously and without consultation – everything shall have begun.

When'll we get the first burnt refinery?

-A free and revolting electron who hopes for a very high-tension current in order not to have to sleep at night ... too long.

PS: a note to the democratic conspiracy theorists: comrades, in order no longer to have any doubts whether or not there are cop-provocateurs who bust shop windows and commit all sorts of violent acts, notably around the Parisian black blocs, next time get your hands on an iron bar and bust it first. It's the only shock therapy which you have available. Other than that you can still rejoin the ranks of the SO [?] or, further afield, those militant Stalinists forming up. But pay attention, you're going to get one bang in the face, because even if we know that the SO don't have cops embedded in their ranks (oh shit, yeah, there are sectoral branches of cops and prison guards in a fair few union) we also know that those guys have cops well-embedded in their heads. So they'll be treated as such. Pigs to slaughter.