

# No to the state of emergency - Defy the curfew

Saturday 19 November 2005, by [BESANCENOT Olivier](#), [LCR \(France\)](#) (Date first published: November 2005).

**Nearly two weeks into the wave of rioting by young people of mainly North and Black African origin in the poor neighbourhoods around France's towns and cities, the government has reacted by reviving a 1955 law instituting a State of Emergency and giving it sweeping repressive powers. We are reproducing three documents issued on 8 November; a national leaflet of the LCR (French section of the Fourth International), a press statement by LCR spokesperson Olivier Besancenot, and a statement from the LCR. (International Viewpoint).**

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## National LCR leaflet

### **The state of emergency is a crime against democracy!**

Angry young people and the local populations, in solidarity against the government! Chirac and the government are sticking to the path they have chosen. Far from defusing the crisis, by responding to urgent social needs, the government has decided to increase the level of repression. Now it has reactivated the 1955 law on the state of emergency, a law which led to the worst attacks on civil liberties during the Algerian War. At the same time it is sending dozens of young people to face courts that are virtually emergency tribunals.

Revolted by the tragedy of Clichy, where two teenagers died, young people from of dozens of housing estates all over the country have been confronting the police night after night, for several days now. Although the anger of these young people, who are unemployed and unqualified, (the Citroen car factory in Aulnay has just laid off 700 temporary workers), and who are victims of racism, is understandable, they have got the wrong target when they burn the cars of local people, schools, gymnasiums or nurseries. The enemy is the government's policies and it is all together, angry young people and the local population, that we have to fight Sarkozy and all the policies that have wrecked these neighbourhoods for more than twenty years.

The government is responsible for the situation that has been created

The policies of Villepin and Sarkozy lead to mass unemployment and job insecurity, aggravating the growing poverty. Around the big cities the development of real ghettos goes hand in hand with increasingly intolerable forms of discrimination. They are dismantling the state education system,

which leads to steadily rising failure rates. As a result of the logic of deregulation policies, neighbourhood public services are in ruins. They are continually cutting credits for preventive action. Social housing is everywhere being sacrificed. There you have the daily lot of a large part of the population of this country. Meanwhile, in the National Assembly, the governing majority is cutting wealth tax and exonerating shareholders from paying tax on their dividends.

### **Sarkozy, the fire-raising firefighter, must go!**

The logical corollary of this class policy that is being so shamelessly conducted, is that police checks are becoming each day more odious and violent. The poison of racism is spreading, encouraged by the provocative declarations of Sarkozy. Carried away by his desire to criminalise a whole layer of young people, the Minister of the Interior went so far as to insult them by describing them as “rabble” and “gangrene”.

Engaged in a permanent pre-electoral campaign, seeking to win favour with Le Pen’s electorate, he has announced that he will go each week to a different suburban housing estate. The only effect of that will be to accentuate the police pressure on the areas concerned and make the situation even more explosive. This climate of violence is intolerable for the people who live there and will only make their daily lives even more difficult.

There’s no doubt about it, Sarkozy, the fire-raiser of the suburbs, has got to go! And this government, systematically disavowed by the voters, has no legitimacy to carry out these policies. Yesterday, it was sending the GIGN [elite police unit] against the seafarers of the SNCM. Today, it has the Marseilles tram workers’ strike declared illegal, it is criminalising the suburbs and wants to impose curfews. As sole response to the despair of young people, it goes so far as to propose making them leave school at 14 and handing them over to be exploited by the bosses.

### **A popular mobilisation is needed!**

### **All together against the government!**

It is not the uncontrolled intervention of the police that will settle the problems that exist, but the intervention of the local populations. It is the mobilisation of progressive forces that is decisive. We have to stop the police provocations and take action in favour of immediate measures to develop solidarity and cooperation in our neighbourhoods and our estates. Faced with the social disasters that are the result of years of liberalism, we have to demand that priority is given to the creation of stable jobs, to public services, to schools, housing and preventive action.

The action of this government is spreading poverty and producing despair. Nothing is more urgent than to stop it in its tracks. That is what the LCR is calling for.

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### **Press statement by LCR spokesperson Olivier Besancenot**

#### **Defy the curfew**

Statement by Olivier Besancenot: “The decisions announced by M.de Villepin, yesterday evening on TF1 [main television channel], are intolerable. Instead of responding to the social emergency, he has

resuscitated a law dating from the colonial epoch, from the Algerian War, which gives prefects the power to decree a curfew on all or part of the territory of a borough and to suspend a certain number of civil liberties. Already, E.Raoult, mayor of Raincy - the town that spends 2,6% of its budget on house-building - in the vanguard of the repression, had jumped the gun by decreeing such a measure in his town. In this situation the LCR calls on people to defy the curfew by demonstrating in the towns or the neighbourhoods, if necessary at night, where a curfew is decreed by the prefect. The LCR calls on all left-wing and democratic organisations to organise these demonstrations together."

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### **Curfew cannot stop revolt**

*In spite of the emergency powers that came into force at midnight on 9 November, the movement of revolt that is sweeping the poor neighbourhoods and estates on the edges of France's major cities is continuing.*

For the first time the riots spread to a major city centre, when police clashed with stone-throwing youths in Lyon on Saturday afternoon. With his usual subtlety, Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy described it as a "demonstration by anarchists". He has threatened to deport foreign nationals convicted as a result of the riots - which would in fact affect only a small number of the around two thousand young people who have been arrested, (though not all have been charged) since the revolt began on 27 October - most of them, though of immigrant origin, were born in France and so have French nationality.

Although the leadership of the French Socialist Party has acquiesced in the government's measures, other forces on the Left have begun to organise. A first protest rally against the state of emergency took place on 9 November in Bobigny, administrative centre of the Seine-Saint-Denis department where the revolt started, with over 500 people present. It was supported by a wide range of political organisations, trade unions and associations in the department, notably the Communist Party and the LCR, which was represented by Olivier Besancenot.

Emergency powers were used to ban open-air rallies in Paris on Saturday and Lyon on Sunday. Nevertheless 1500 people demonstrated in Paris on Saturday evening against the state of emergency and to demand the resignation of Sarkozy. The LCR, which took part in this demonstration, is in favour of the organisation of a major united-front initiative against the state of emergency in the coming days.

International Viewpoint

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LCR press statement

## **State of emergency: the choice of repression**

### **Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire**

November 14, 2005

As was foreseeable, the government has decided to submit to the vote of the two assemblies [the National Assembly and the Senate] the prorogation for three months of the state of emergency, with the explicit aim of giving *“every means to the forces of order to restore calm”*.

At the same time the decision was announced to install the CRS [riot police], disguised as neighbourhood policemen, in the suburbs. The all-out escalation of security and repressive policies is being confirmed. While the liberal policies of the government are resulting in important social fightbacks, Chirac and his government have chosen the option “state of emergency”, which, added to the Vigipirate plan [an “anti-terrorist” measure dating from 1995] gets the population used to living under an emergency regime. What a confession of weakness on the part of a government which has an absolute majority in parliament! The social emergency is disappearing behind the stun guns and such like of the police, behind the summary justice which is presently being applied.

The right to demonstrate, the right to freedom of movement, the right of expression, and the right to strike are now going to depend on the decisions of prefects [unelected, government-appointed local administrators]. The state of emergency is the armed wing of liberalism, to silence or to prevent from acting workers, political organizations, trade unions and associations, to re-establish the double penalty [whereby foreign nationals convicted by courts can be deported at the end of their sentence].

It would be unthinkable for part of the Left to persist in its accommodation with the government and not vote against the prorogation of the state of emergency. For the LCR, it is urgent for a front of organizations to be established, to call a demonstration in the coming days against the state of emergency.

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**P.S.**

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\* The LCR - Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (Revolutionary Communist League) - is the French Section of the Fourth International.