

Slanders depicting “Yellow Vest” protesters as violent neo-fascists collapse

Our reporter
28 November 2018

In the aftermath of last Saturday’s demonstrations in Paris, the French political establishment has unleashed a torrent of political invective against the “Yellow Vest” protesters on the Champs-Elysées. Ministers, police and the media have vied with each other to denounce workers, professionals and small business people who protested in yellow vests as “ultra-left” or neo-Nazis. Their propaganda is totally false.

“It is not yellow vests who demonstrated, but the brown pest [far-right],” Minister of Accounts Gerald Darmanin declared, echoing the Interior Minister Christophe Castaner. The latter called the protesters “seditious” and said they “responded to the call by [National Rally President] Marine Le Pen,” the neo-fascist leader who neither protested on the Champs-Elysées nor appealed for violence.

The police prefect defended his forces’ brutality by citing the threat of “violent ultra-right and ultra-left networks.” *Marianne* denounced a “united ultra-right and ultra-left, these fake ‘yellow vests’ who ransacked the Champs Elysees,” while BFM-TV’s Ruth Elkrief worried over the “influence of a number of parties ... of the extreme-right and extreme-left” on the protests.

The reactionary petty-bourgeois pseudo-left reprised the same insults as Darmanin in order to present the “Yellow Vest” protesters as virulent neo-fascists. *Mediapart*, which is close to the middle-class New Anticapitalist Party, attacked them for having organized “very right-wing demonstrations” or even being “a little brown.”

On Saturday, the police carried out mass arrests of what they declared to be the most dangerous among the protesters. Officers combed through video footage from security cameras in Paris and data provided by helicopters that maintained a heavy presence above the city. This weekend, 101 people were placed in custody.

In the fantasy world promoted by ministers and journalists, this was done to isolate a kernel of the horde of genocidal anti-Semites and anarchists braying for blood who assaulted the capital on Saturday.

What did the police find? In short, nothing. Those placed in custody, in the overwhelming majority, matched the typical profile of a “Yellow Vest” protester: workers who came to show their hostility to social inequality and the policies of the government of Emmanuel Macron.

Le Figaro admitted yesterday: “None of those arrested this weekend in Paris at the revolt by the Yellow Vests had outstanding charges, either of the ultra-right or ultra-left ... Numerous signs and slogans left along the street reference the ultra-left, notably anarchist logos. One must nonetheless look to the evidence: the majority ... are in fact ordinary angered people emboldened by the anonymity of collective action. They are workers, mechanics, cooks, carpenters, farmers and plumbers, aged between 20 and 30.”

Among the “Yellow Vests” who were given immediate trials because they supposedly presented the greatest risk were: a 25-year-old apprentice bus driver, a 40-year-old prison guard who came “to protest against the deterioration of the public service,” and a single mother who allegedly threw black paint on the police.

There is no doubt a danger that, in the absence of a political leadership among the protesters, sections of the bourgeoisie will respond by seeking to place the far-right at the head of the movement. But this would be a head that had nothing in common with the sentiments for equality and the defense of democratic and social rights that animates the overwhelming majority of protesters.

The verbal attacks unleashed against the “Yellow

“Vests” by ministers and journalists reflect the panic of ruling circles toward a movement of deep social anger over inequality and against Macron, the president of the rich.

In the meantime, the media constantly discovers new reasons to promote fears in the population, spreading rumours that among the workers the most bloodthirsty counterrevolutionary forces are strengthening. Is the fleur-de-lys of the French monarchist flag hiding itself behind the fleur-de-lys of the nationalist flag of Brittany? Did Maréchal Le Pen, the neo-fascist leader close to extreme-monarchist Action Française, go to the Champs-Elysées, and with whom?

We are not in possession of any concrete information on this subject. But Maréchal Le Pen provided a disheartened testimony on the “Yellow Vest” protests that is not without interest. After arriving on the Champs-Elysées at 2 p.m. on Saturday, she concluded that the road was occupied by dangerous communists: “The movement was totally absorbed by extreme left militants. One could hear the words ‘Death to capitalism!’ If that is the ultra-right, then things have truly changed.”



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