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# I. New Hope for the Old Continent

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LAROCHE PAC WEBCAST

## France Rises: The ‘Yellow Vest’ Movement Potential for a New Paradigm

*This is the edited transcript of an interview with Jacques Cheminade, head of the Solidarité et Progrès (Solidarity and Progress) party and three-time candidate for President of France. He was interviewed by Matthew Ogden.*

**Matthew Ogden:** Good morning! It is December 7, 2018. We’re joined today by a special guest from Paris, France. Jacques Cheminade, who is the head of the Solidarity and Progress party and a long-time friend of Lyndon LaRouche. Jacques was a candidate in the French presidential elections three times, last in 2017.

Jacques was out with the Yellow Vest protesters, the *gilets jaunes*. These protests have been sweeping France for now close to three weeks. Hundreds of thousands of French citizens have taken to the streets across France to protest the policies of the Macron government and to demand immediate change. This is a very rapidly developing movement. Jacques, let me ask you: Are we witnessing the development of a mass strike?

**Jacques Cheminade:** This is mass-strike ferment. It means that the past is being rejected, but the ideas for a future have not yet been put forward by the *gilets*



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*A Yellow Vest demonstration fills the Avenue des Champs Élysées in Paris on Nov. 24, 2018.*



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*Jacques Cheminade speaks with Yellow Vest demonstrators, December 2018.*



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*Cheminade speaks with Yellow Vest demonstrators, near the Millau Viaduc, a suspension bridge near Millau in southern France, December 2018.*

*jaunes* movement. There are very good people, all working together, protesting what they have been forced to suffer for too long. They are inexperienced in politics. They still lack a policy project. Our task is to enlighten them; to give them the sense of the different policies that are needed. But, we can't impose these ideas from outside. We can only offer the inspiration. So, our task is to inspire this movement, and to give them a sense of what they have the capacity to do.

It's a winter of discontent, I'll put it that way, and it's an emotional uprising. It's emotional in the sense that people feel that there has been no social progress in the last 30-40 years in France; that French industry is being erased, it is disappearing. These are people who have been hit hard by the carbon tax against fuel, against gasoline, and against diesel consumption. These are people who need their cars to survive.

At the beginning it was a protest with the cry, "We need our cars to go to work. We are here in France, and most social services have disappeared; the baker has

disappeared; the post office has disappeared. We need our cars to travel long distances to our workplaces, if we are lucky enough to have one. Those jobs are farther and farther from our homes, so we need cars. And all of a sudden, we were hit with this carbon tax, and we feel that this thing is using ecology as a pretext to loot and take our money."

Look at it from an historical standpoint, look at the movie, *The Battleship Potemkin*, in which you see how rotten meat served to sailors started the 1905 Russian uprising. Here, too, it is the same thing. People are reacting to something, and the government does not respond; it has turned a deaf ear. So, the process has continued. In this kind of social movement, people's level of consciousness gets higher and higher, and they begin to understand better and better why they are being oppressed, why they are being attacked, and they start to think ahead and ahead. In a certain sense, they start to think with the eyes of the future, as I characterized such vision in my program for my 2017 Presidential campaign.

The second great concern that emerged is the loss of purchasing power. They said increasing the taxes is one thing, but we are also losing our purchasing power—that really is the reason for our uprising. They have also said that the policy—and I have read what they are circulating—the policy is Robin Hood in reverse. The government is using ecology as an excuse to go after us. These Parisians keep talking and talking about the end of the world—but for us, it's the end of the month! We are the real victims of this policy.

The third step in this growing movement is a demand for different policies, including to stop the dictatorship and demands from the big banks. The Yellow Vests are now demanding, "Macron out! Out!" Macron should leave, but at the same time, everybody should leave; all the politicians are rotten. There is a certain populism in that sense. These people are protesting against something that has been hitting them more and more for the last 30 years. That is what you need to know to understand this process.

The established people, people in government, keep trying to launch provocations. That is what happens, fed by all the press, all the media show virtually nothing other than the violence that occurred in Paris. The demonstrations will be continuing in the provinces and in Paris this weekend. In Paris, it could be very hot tomorrow, nobody knows what will happen. Reasonable people have been saying, as we have been, "Organize

non-violence. Let's not fall in the trap of the provocations of the government, the black-block and the extreme right wingers."

When you look at the violence last Saturday, you see something very interesting. In the morning: There were a few extreme right-wingers who launched the violence. Then by mid-day, it was the extreme left-wingers, this so-called "anti-fa." In the late evening, it was people coming from the poor suburbs surrounding Paris, to loot. These groups tried to get some of these *gilets jaunes*, the Yellow Vests, involved in the violence, and some of them joined in because they were furious.

If you look more in depth, the police and the *gendarmes* are, in France, from the same social origin as the Yellow Vests. The *gilet jaunes* are not the very poor, they are the middle class and the working poor. These are people who find themselves at the end of the month saying we can't make ends meet. We need 50 euros more to make it; we can't continue like this. The political elite is in absolute disarray faced with this; the political elite tried to give, little by little, certain concessions. But these concessions, had they been offered at the beginning of the protests, might have been a way to divide the Yellow Vests. Now it isn't working; it's too late.

So, now a new sort of polemic is emerging, going more in depth, and in depth against the financial dictatorship, the City of London, Wall Street. Certain people are saying it that way, and thinking about what better



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*Yellow Vest demonstrators on the streets of Paris, Nov. 24, 2018.*

world should we have, and asking questions.

When I went to see them, people start to ask questions. What are you doing? What are you proposing? What is the long-term policy that we need? There is this dialogue which has started, and it's very interesting because the motion is spreading in all social layers. It's spreading to truck drivers, nurses, and now high school students. It's spreading. It's very important that farmers are also going into the movement. And it's spreading in Europe. You have *gilets jaunes*—Yellow Vests—in Bulgaria, in

Serbia. In Serbia, a member of the Parliament came into the Parliament wearing a yellow vest. Here too, in France, we have a deputy who came wearing a yellow vest in Parliament; he was punished for that, but he is continuing.

### Look to Martin Luther King and FDR

These people need a broader horizon; they need a policy; they need to think about how they can continue without staying at the same level of protest. So, that's a challenge, a big challenge for the future. Also, to see by what means they should act. We are saying, "Look, Martin Luther King in the U.S. is an example. It's organized non-violence to avoid provocations and the violent set-up from abroad, from the government, or some other provocateurs." This is the point at which we are now, and I was thinking about it, and I have a quote from Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, which says quite well what



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*A Yellow Vest demonstrator's sign reads "Macron: Get Lost!" Paris, Nov. 24, 2018.*

we feel here, seen from the standpoint or with the words of an American patriot. She said, “It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.”

So, we are trying to light the candle, and we are trying to enlighten the forces and see how they can work out with a long-term project, a political project, and let’s say sweeping aside all forecasts and prejudices. The thing that helps us is that as early as 2009, I wrote something which certain people remember, because we distributed one million leaflets of that declaration. It was “To the anger that’s coming,” and it was 2009. I said this anger came in Russia in 1917, in Germany in 1989, in the United States in 2009, and in the whole world you have the same ferment among men and women. There are a lot of women among the demonstrators, which is very interesting because usually women don’t go out to protest. They demand that all the prejudices and all established ways of thinking be swept away, and to get a new way of thinking.

So, they say in particular, and I have the quote here, they say, “We have read with a lot of interest what you have been writing, and we appreciated in particular that it is not such and such injustice which is at the core of the problem, but all the logics of the financial domination that destroys human life.” So, there we are. We are at that point of thinking with the movement. They said it is not this and that; it is our lives that are at stake, our lives. Really, it’s our lives. And we want to change our lives; we don’t want the policy of the rich, for the rich, by the rich. We want the policy of the people, for the people, by the people.

The words of Lincoln are written into the French Constitution. It says, Title I, about sovereignty, and the second article, the principle of the French nation is of the



Eleanor Roosevelt, in 1943. FDR Library



Many women are active among the Yellow Vest demonstrators: “It’s our lives, too.” S&P

people, for the people, by the people. So, we have it; this is a true French-American connection, not the connection of the financiers of Wall Street with financiers in the City of London and financiers in the French big banks. There are four big banks which are fully associated with Wall Street and the City of London.

So, people thinking about that, start to increase their level of consciousness, and this gives a form to the mass strike ferment. So, at this point, I think there is a great hope, and at the same time a danger; because you have in France this rage produced by years and years of oppression. So, you have to give a positive form to that rage, and it’s our challenge to be *Aufklärer*, as they say in Germany, people who enlighten the movement and are at the disposal of the Yellow Vests to answer the questions and give a horizon to the fight.

So, I would conclude this brief description of the situation by saying it should not be a description, it should be action, it should be motion. And the motion should be linked to in-depth thinking about what is happening in France and what’s happening in the world, because you have not only these things in Serbia, these things

in Bulgaria. You have some of it in Germany, you have more in Belgium, and it takes different forms. It takes different forms of protest, but in the field, when they are on the roads, on the highways, or in the center of Paris, they tend to associate themselves.

The danger at this point is the provocations, and let’s see what happens tomorrow. But it’s a wave of protest which is very deep in society, and this will never disappear. The direction it will take depends upon all of us who are trying to give a future to this society and to this world. So, it’s very interesting also that at the same time, our Schiller Institute is selling the New Silk Road report

in French; we have just updated it in French. There is a lot of interest here, even in part of the elites, to see if there is a way to get out of the dilemma and to find a future.

**Ogden:** Let me ask you to elaborate on that point, because while ostensibly the direct trigger of these protests was the fuel tax from the Macron government, the lack of a living wage, these conditions internal to France—this is by no means a unique French sort of situation. We've seen over the last several years this wave of uprisings against all established political parties—here in the United States in the past Presidential election, with Brexit in the UK, and in the new government in Italy.

**Cheminade:** It takes different forms in various countries. As you said, it's a multiplicity going in the direction of a unity. That's an interesting thing that's happening. In France, we see groups of people—who have never been associated with political parties—who have, through social networks, but mostly by direct contact with each other in various parts of the country, decided to go out to demonstrate. This happened all of a sudden; nobody had predicted such a thing happening. We had a certain sense that something might happen, knowing what was going on.

But nobody thought that this would happen in France, because France is supposed to be controlled by the left, by the right, more than any other country, by all political parties,— every day they invent the new party trying to control the process. So, our advantage, compared to all these people, is the way I was mistreated in French politics.

When they know what was done to Lyndon LaRouche in the United States, when they have a certain sense of what was done to me, because of the three Presidential elections, they get it. They say they have mocked you, they have attacked you, they have done to you exactly what's happening to us. So, we are understood by them from this immediate standpoint. I tell them you have to go deeper into the understanding. What we are trying to do, in various layers, is to give them what they need; to give them the nourishment to feed them, which is what they need to develop their thinking and go further than what they themselves expected.

I was invited to speak at three universities in Lille, a city of more than one million people, in the north of France, near the Belgian border. There I told the students, "I got only 0.18% in the Presidential vote. It's very little." They replied, "It's precisely for that [reason] that we want you. Because we know that if they did that

to you, it's that you are different. We want to know why you are different, and what you have in your stomach. Please tell us." So, we had very interesting exchanges with hundreds of them.

Also, we are launching a series with a young person in our organization, who is giving a sense of what economics is; what's happening. So, it starts with the LaRouche Triple Curve, with a comment on what is the current situation. Then it goes now to the issue of the debt; what is the debt and where it comes from, and how the French economic policy was controlled by the state, which was a Rooseveltian policy, between 1945 up to 1970. In that period of time, which is called here the Thirty Glorious Years, there was a big development with a planning agency and the state controlling the issuance of money and credit. This has been destroyed little by little. To give that sense to the youth now, and the youth were understanding what is happening also to the Yellow Vests, it's I think a very interesting process.

We are trying to find a language that these young people can understand, using some of the language you find on YouTube, infusing it with our ideas and trying to hit them from that side—reaching students in universities, students who follow YouTube, and also students active with the Yellow Vests. A lot of our people have gone out with them, for example, one group went out in the streets of Paris carrying an enormous cardboard scale model with, "The Bank of France should be the Bank of the People; not the Central Bank of the Big Banks" written on it. This was a tremendous success; people were taking pictures from all sides. We told them, taking pictures is okay; but you need to use your mind now and to begin to understand what policies are needed, what political projects are needed to move forward.

**Ogden:** The YouTube [videos](#) produced by Benôit Odille are excellent.

Your declaration, with a series of clear policy points of what has to be implemented inside France, is being circulated among the Yellow Vest movement. Please tell our viewers about that program.

**Cheminade:** The first point is respect for the French Constitution; a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. So, this has to be respected. From this, you can derive all that the Yellow Vests are demanding. They are demanding many things, sometimes things that seem confusing. We have said to the Yellow Vests; your main demands should be fulfilled. First, the carbon tax should be eliminated, abolished. The gov-

ernment is now suspending it. Then, it was announced that the tax increase would be eliminated, but not the tax itself. The tax itself is the first problem; it should be eliminated; it has nothing to do with reality.

Then there was an income tax of the wealthy on financial flows that they decided to abolish. So, we are calling to bring back in force this “Tax on Fortunes” (ISF) immediately, which will compensate for the elimination of the carbon tax. At the same time, to work out with the middle-sized firms and the upper middle-sized firms and the Yellow Vests to see what policy could be conceived for development of France. What’s happening now is that all the jobs are near or directly in the big cities—and those are for the most part service jobs—while housing is much less expensive much further away from the big cities.

Jobs need to be developed where the people live, where they have housing. We need to have a policy where all of the territory of France is fully developed—in the past it was called the *Aménagement du territoire*, the management of all the territory of France. Now that French territory has been disorganized—we are calling for the reorganization of the French territory as it was done in the 1950s and the 1960s. We are stressing that when in 1983 the Mitterrand government decided to go for austerity in the name of Europe, it’s then that things changed and that the French lost national sovereignty of their money and they gave the state to the money-changers, as you would say there in the United States.

We called also for a re-examination of all the climate-change policy, and to have a discussion of what it means. We have here next Wednesday, an expert on climate change who was a member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). This guy was a member of the IPCC, but he challenged the conclusions. He said the statistics may be good, but the models that they throw at peoples’ heads are all fake. So, he said, let’s look at the statistics and look at the work of all scientists, and see exactly what it is and put that on the table.

Also, I said, you should go into the depth of what they need, and the depth of what they need is a policy for infrastructure, for the labs, for the schools, for the hospitals, and we need equipment of man and nature. This can only be done with Glass-Steagall banking separation and a national bank organizing credit, together with a planning agency associated with the national bank. In the national bank, there should not be experts from the Treasury or experts from different banks; there should be the people associated with the work of this national bank. Not a central bank, a national bank controlled by the state.



UN/Eskinder Debebe

*French President Emmanuel Macron briefs journalists at the opening of the United Nations General Assembly, United Nations, NY, Sept. 25, 2018.*

Then, of course, we call for what you would call the two last Laws of LaRouche, which is the credit policy controlled and promoted by this national bank for the future. This, people start to understand, because they understand the difference; who owns the credit, owns power. Here the credit has been misused for entertaining people and preventing them from protesting, and mainly to feed the financial oligarchy. So, people start to understand that the problem is not more or less credit, it is credit oriented by the state for the people. And they start to understand what credit means in that sense, and that the national bank should be on top of controlling the credit. And that this power was abandoned by the national bank, because the national bank became a central bank, and it became the European Central Bank, and the European Central Bank is the true power in Europe, directly connected through the euro with Wall Street and the City of London.

So, then people start to understand from where their oppression comes, and they get more and more interested when they manage to master or control their rage, they start to understand the process by which they have been subjected for the last 30, 40, 50 years. It’s very interesting all of sudden that they’re thinking starts to go to a higher level, and they are interested in the way in which the state works and what the state means, and what it means for them to be a patriot and a world citizen, as Schiller said. We remind them that the French Revolution failed and brought Napoleon to power, be-

cause this was not developed.

The call for development of the society of France—let's say France in the best sense of France—above political parties, should meet and discuss these policies, and read the main works written by people on these policies, get acquainted with what was done by Roosevelt, by de Gaulle, or by others, and how there is a community of principle in the development of the United States, of China now with Xi Jinping, even of Russia under the Soviet Union. And also of course, Roosevelt's New Deal is the best example of these policies. People start thinking and making comparisons; their minds start to work, and that's the way, I think, really to change things. We are telling people we are calling to get rid of Macron; OK, but this leads to nowhere if you don't have other people to replace him.

These other people should be you in the process of thinking, working, and seeing what can be proposed nationally and internationally in France, in Europe, and in the whole world. It's from that sense that you should see what the New Silk Road represents as a principle. The Chinese would not do the whole job; you have to work, and we have to work with them, to make their job and our job much better. So, that's what we are working on, and that's why we are a political party and a political force.

**Ogden:** Last week we interviewed an Italian member of the European Parliament, Marco Zanni, who was here in the United States doing a series of meetings with members of the United States Congress and other representatives of the U.S. government. He was discussing exactly the same program: Glass-Steagall, bank separation; restoration of sovereignty over national banking for the countries of Europe; a direction of credit into productive employment; and also working together with the Silk Road and the Belt and Road Initiative, which is coming out of China.

These were very effective meetings that Marco Zanni had, and I think it represents a very rich potential for the United States to reach out to very specific representatives of this new process which is emerging inside Europe to put together this kind of partnership. How do you see what's happening with the Yellow Vests in France and the potential which is coming out of that, intersecting what is happening here in the United States?

**Cheminade:** It's a very interesting situation, because before the Yellow Vests insurrection, if you want to call it that, the process was much less advanced in France than in Italy. Then all of sudden, a shift of policy

comes from Italy, from something that is called "extreme right-wing" by the press. In a sense, all the political labels are being thrown to the wastebasket. They mean nothing. What has meaning is to see what is being done, what people are involved in. A very interesting thing with the Yellow Vests is that in France, a country that tends to be very blocked and rigid, these Yellow Vests actions are un-murking all the processes. I don't know what form it will take immediately.

We have a constitutional republic, so Macron may stay; but he will be under total pressure from the field, from the people, from everybody. And he would be paralyzed in his attempt to put together a policy for the oligarchical elites, the financiers. So, it will be a change; whatever happens is a big change, a big shift. So, this is very interesting for the United States, which I think if Trump decided to do so, he would be freed progressively from the people that are preventing him from doing what he has the instinct to do.

The thing is to be ahead of him by showing him the direction the world is moving in together. In Italy, with two heroic people, they managed to collect 217 signatures to promote, defend, and implement Glass-Steagall and to bring those signatures to the American Senate and House of Representatives. So, it's very important that we have that.

The Yellow Vests movement has created big changes. All the political parties are disoriented; they don't know what to do about it. There is big risk of more provocations against the coming Saturday demonstrations and the Yellow Vests have no security squads to protect demonstrators. Interestingly, the CGT and the Force Ouvrière, the two main unions who are allegedly on the "left" are planning to protect the Yellow Vests from the provocateurs. So, that's interesting as a convergence of interest, where you would not have expected this to happen.

So, our eyes should be not wide shut, but rather wide open to these shifts—and our minds even more, to seize every occasion, every opportunity to feed into this process, with our more than 40 years of experience. What our movement has done in the United States, with everything that Lyndon LaRouche has done in the last fifty or more years, we have a living power to change history for the good. To become alive to that, you have to understand and absorb LaRouche's works and make that alive right now.

This means to be, in a sense, the creators of inspiration—not people merely repeating things from the past. I say this because it is important to understand that



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*Yellow Vest demonstrators block traffic outside of Paris.*

people only connect when they see something alive—then they are very happy to see ideas. With the Yellow Vests, most of whom are not politically educated—they immediately react to living ideas. If you give them something that seems to be simply repetitive or formal, they immediately say, “Oh, you’re just another politician, ugh!” It is very interesting to see mass-strike ferment happening right under our noses; it’s a tremendous opportunity. There’s danger in this, as the Chinese would say, but also a tremendous opportunity.

**Ogden:** I have one last question. This was the final question that I asked last week of Liliana Gorini, the leader of the *MoviSol* movement in Italy. I asked her, from your experience over 40 years, working for the victory, for the emergence of a just new international economic order, which Lyndon and Helga LaRouche have been calling for since the beginning of the 1970s. How do you see this process in the context of that history? What steps have to be taken to secure a victory in this fight?

**Cheminade:** As Schiller stated: “We all have to become patriots and citizens of the world.” There is a oneness. Also, let us not underestimate—or overestimate—what the United States can do for Europe, because of what is happening in China and what is happening in the United States. We have an opportunity to break with the Anglo-American Empire—the British Empire. The British author, Nicholas Shaxson, called it *The Men Who Stole the World*.<sup>1</sup> With their offshore

1. This book by Nicholas Shaxson describes the transformation of the territorial British Empire into a British or Anglo-American Empire based on off-shore facilities and the control over a dollar alienated from

banks, they think they can run the world from their “Treasure Islands.” These people have to be exposed for what they are. If we expose them from both sides of the Atlantic, inspired by what’s happening in the Pacific, then we have the world, and it’s our moment in history. It’s more than ever our historical moment.

I must also add the dimension of aesthetics, the dimension of *Aesthetical Education* is very important in periods like this to master and overcome rage and anger—to give people a positive direction. I think this, the work that we are doing on music, is essential. I just participated in a meeting in Marseilles on the subject, “Is the World Logical?” It was with a top French scientist. I said that the world fortunately is not logical in the form of the precise moment; it shifts, it changes. There is what Einstein said, you can never solve a problem with the elements that created the problem. We have to go above. Here we have people who have met these *gilets jaunes*—who are so different, with such different political ideas—in a really live way.

What we are doing in the United States, what we are doing in the whole world is a coincidence of opposites. So, you have it, and this process has a life of its own. I think it’s very important to feed and to feed and to feed and to give it a sense of joy; because it’s really joyful to see that, and to be part of it, of course.

**Ogden:** Thank you so much, Jacques. It was really a pleasure speaking with you. We hope to have a chance to speak with you again soon.

To learn more about our guest today and his party in France, visit <https://www.solidariteetprogres.org/>.

the American people, which has become a British imperial instrument.