

## Monthly letter 158 – January 2019

The Greek historian Polybius of Megalopolis (-220-120?), greatly appreciated by Cicero and Machiavelli, developed the notion of *anacyclosis*, a theory of the cyclical succession of the six phases of political regimes. According to this theory, three pairs of constitutional types succeed each other: monarchy and tyranny, aristocracy and oligarchy, democracy and ochlocracy.

The first five words are familiar; the sixth one is outside our common representation of the world.

Nevertheless, the question must be asked. The Greek word *Okhlos* means "a crowd". Thus ochlocracy means, etymologically, a government by the crowd, which Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in his *Social Contract* defined as a degenerate form of democracy.

In 1791, in his *Vindiciae Gallicae*, the Scottish philosopher James Mackintosh, showed that the authority of an unruly mob, which goes together with the despotism of the rabble and the disorder of ochlocracy, was different from the authority of the people, which is related to the spirit of the laws it gave to itself and which produce the democratic order.

One also ought to consider the garment worn as a banner by the demonstrators of the Saturdays of the last months. The legal purpose of the yellow vest was to render the person who wears it conspicuously visible in order to protect him from the Other.

In the original context of a protest against regulatory or fiscal decisions viewed as so many infringements of road mobility, the use of that garment does indeed show that his wearer is afraid of being destroyed by the Other.

Considering the political exploitation of the movement by the various extreme right or extreme left groups, by the rioters and looters and by some political organisations, that garment, physically worn by the ones, symbolically by the others, becomes a camouflage suit which, by a classical inversion, allows both the ones and the others to have a terrorist behaviour and to attempt to annihilate the Other, preferably if he represents law and order.

This is how the yellow vest becomes the modern Trajan horse of ochlocracy in our democracy.

Above all, we must look at the fact that some 10% of potential voters are not registered on electoral lists, and that at least 25% of registered citizens do not vote. Sociological research shows that non-registration and abstention are both higher among people who are young, with a low level of education and who belong to the popular classes.

It follows that at least one third of the population deliberately refuses to join the democratic process and, in the famous formulation of Blaise Pascal, prefer diversion to awareness.

In a Republic, a legal obligation for citizens to take part in elections at all levels would be far superior, ethically, to random participations in street demonstrations.

In Freemasonry:

We are especially proud of our democratic ways, of our ballots by white and black balls which rule out abstention.

We are particularly respectful of the Presidents of our Lodges under whose authority we work during their term of office.

We are especially accustomed, in the case of disputes, to resort to the Law whose guardian is an Officer of the Lodge: the Orator.

All our minds are inhabited by our masonic Utopia, as it was expressed in the philosophy of the Chevalier de Ramsay who advocated the Universal Republic which unites the minds and the hearts, as well as by the social scheme of Léon Bourgeois who, at the beginning of the last century, advocated *solidarism*, a layman's expression of solidarity.

Consequently, we stand in solidarity with the calls of distress of the yellow vests, voiced by citizens who feel lost, forgotten, unrecognised. We cannot, however admit that law enforcement forces, firemen, medical professions, elected representatives, journalists, as well as public and private property, should be subject to all kinds of aggressions, committed by outlaws who under the cover of yellow vests, give vent to an uncontrollable and inadmissible violence, not worthy of the level of civilisation which we claim to have reached.

Therefore, we ought to make every effort, by a ceaseless and fruitful action, to make sure that our motto *Ordo ab Chao* to which we refer in our Lodges, should also, as far as possible be applied outside the Lodges.

Jacques ORÉFICE, 33°

Sovereign Grand Commander