

For Naël and the others

First published anonymously on Paris-luttes.info, on June 28th 2023, as a response to the police murder of Naël and subsequent night of riots in France.

So here we are again, another one, one more, one of our own killed by police bullets. He was 17 years old. The policeman put his gun to his head and told him he was going to shoot. He fled. The cop shoots. One dead. Does a brother have to be killed to be moved to a moment of solidarity?

That of global security experts, politicians, police unions, prefects, in short, a parade of all those people who will explain in great detail that the police are exemplary, that justice will do its job, that Law is Law. They will continue to spout their filth in the media and at press conferences. Through this flood of words, they seek to hide the truth, which is however simple: the police kills. A police officer shooting his gun is only the consequence of the laws legitimizing the shooting in a situation of refusal to comply to orders, of all these experts who promote increasingly violent and sophisticated weapons so that the Ministry of the Interior buys always more of them, of those politicians who always stigmatise the same fringes of the population, the dangerous, the radicalised, the non-republican, the enemy within. They construct a racist discourse, and by their words they justify and prepare the ground. From Sarkozy to Darmanin, the same rhetoric seeks to justify a man's death because a police officer is tired or because, in the end, the man who refuses to obey knows what awaits him.

It is therefore impossible to remain calm. No one will fight police violence better than those who experience it on a daily basis, who suffer it, who know it, the one that plagues our neighbourhoods. Back in 2005, our brothers rose up in honourable opposition to those who had made them and their families suffer for so many years. So, in response to the band La Rumeur who asked a few years ago "how long will the ghetto remain so patient?", we reply that on this evening of June 27, some people are refusing to submit, are taking action, and will not be silent.

No justice, no peace. Today and in the days to come, the challenge is to stand alongside people who are revolting, to forge links, to provide legal and anti-rep assistance if necessary (without posing as a teacher), to write texts, distribute them, make signs, banners. If the connection is made as has been the case in the past to a certain extent (Théo affair, Adama, etc.), we will really be able to claim intersectionality, at least so that our anti-racist tirades are not exclusively words devoid of action.

translation from riotforliberty.medium.com

"Statistics and Sentiments" (On the Riots of June 2023)

by roland simon

"When statistics penetrate the masses, sentiment becomes a material force."

- Anonymous

There will be no statistics.

Multiplying statistics to say, as "local elected representatives" and "social mediators" do: "We warned you, it's going to explode", explains and accounts for nothing as far as events are concerned: neither their form, nor the moment, nor the content, nor the targets. In action, all the objective, "explanatory," data exist as feelings, become feelings: from hatred and revenge, to play, celebration and the beautiful imaginary projection of oneself regaining control of one's life for a moment. Why not video games? Everyone operates in forests of references and symbols, and statistics never put anyone on the street unless transmuted by the modalities of experience.

Every practice operates under an ideology, and sentiment (revenge and hatred in the face of contempt, envy of the forbidden commodity) is one such ideology. Sentiment is a relation to relations of production; it is even the most obvious, the most immediate form of interpellation of concrete individuals as subjects. But the "concrete individual" is not a primary substratum; it is itself produced in the reproduction of the mode of production in all its forms of appearance and all its fetishism. It is the concrete individual who self-interpels as subject. Racialized teenagers self-interpolate as subjects, though obviously not under the same ideology as a worker or a pensioner. The feeling: hatred, revenge, the desire to consume not only Aldi or Lidl products but also the latest phones and flat screens, playfulness and self-affirmation. Against its constant denial, the specific ideology of the young rioters is precisely to claim themselves as "human"; dignity is the purest form of the subject. Sentiment does not represent their actual conditions of existence, but their relationship to them, and it is in this relationship that they constitute themselves as subjects, and as such act and struggle appropriately to their real existence as defined and existing in a particular social and political situation.

Having restructured itself worldwide in the 1970s, against Keynes and Ford, by disconnecting the valorization of capital from the reproduction of labor power, the mode of production is now undermined by a crank reversal of what was the dynamic of the last thirty or forty years.

There were the Gilets Jaunes, who put everyday life, in all its vagaries, piles and faces, at the center of the class struggle, and questioned the State as the party responsible for

the distribution, income, wealth of some and poverty of others.

There was the long episode relating to pension reform, in which the inter-union movement succeeded throughout in framing the movement because, as a stillborn movement, its only aim was defeat, of which the inter-union movement was the appropriate form. A reform which, in conjunction with unemployment insurance, apprenticeship and training, vocational high schools and their financing, is changing the whole course of working life. But, in its predicted defeat, the crisis of representative democracy became evident in the accumulation of all constitutional expedients to impose a decision already taken before any "discussion".

There was the Covid period, with its confinements and territorially-targeted repression of anyone who deviated from them.

Then there was ecological radicalism against capital's major construction projects. A sympathetic movement, were it not for the fact that the nostalgia for the peasantry, small-scale trade and small-scale commodity production is always present: mediocrity in everything.

There's inflation, a magical phenomenon that seems to have come from another planet to strike hard at everyday consumer goods.

And every time there's the state and its various armed gangs. The State is the baton. Behind each of its apparatuses, its "services", there is force. It's a machine that transforms the reciprocal violence that runs through all facets of class struggle into the only legitimate violence, that of the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production. With the disintegration of the "workers' movement", its bodies and institutions, representative democracy collapses along with politics, which is the reciprocal relationship between the state and civil society (the transcription of relations of production into state terms). The neo-fascists become liberals, pursue a policy of austerity, and join Europe and NATO, while the left and the right compete in "reforms" of the labor code and pensions.

The pacified representation in the "general will" of a society recognized as necessarily conflictual (this is the strength of democracy) is a work, not a reflection. In other words, in the democratic functioning of the state, reification and fetishism are activities, politics as parties, debates, deliberations, power relations in the specific sphere of civil society, decisions. All of this has disappeared. The problem of democracy today is that there

is only one particularity of the social totality capable of competing: the disappearance of the working-class identity and its representation has dragged all the others into its wreckage, including the associations, fronts or movements of the “banlieues” or “quartiers populaires”. And yet, alone, as a political particularity, the ruling class is nothing, nothing as a universal stooge. In the disappearance of the democratic game, the bourgeoisie plays its universality. There is a fundamental malaise in political representation. Everywhere, the mediations of the violence of social relations are crumbling.

It's the work of representation that's in crisis. Everywhere, it is the disappearance of working-class identity, and hence of its social-democratic and/or communist political representation, that is destabilizing the political foundation of the democratic state. The latter is the pacification of a social cleavage that democracy recognizes as real at the very moment it represents it as a confrontation between citizens. Democracy is the recognition of the irreducibly conflictual nature of the “national community”. From this point of view, recognition of the working class has historically been at the heart of the construction of democracy, and has even been its driving force and criterion. In the current political course of the crisis, we can see a crisis in the hegemony of the capitalist class. Domination and hegemony are not identical; there can be domination without hegemony. Hegemony consists in producing the inescapable framework for debate and opposition, and imposing the very terms of opposition on others. When that collapses, all that's left for the worst-placed players is the baton.

You have to read an English newspaper (The Guardian, June 29) to find the most pertinent account of the riots at the end of June 2023: “It was war, I really think young people here see themselves as at war. They see it as a war against the system. It's not just against the police, it goes further than that, otherwise we wouldn't be seeing this all over France. It's not just the police who are under attack, but town halls and public buildings too. The death of this teenager has triggered something. There's a lot of anger, but it goes further than that. There's a political dimension, a feeling that the system isn't working. Young people feel discriminated against and ignored”.

When people are relegated to abandoned neighborhoods by public services, where the only presence of the state is the police acting like rival gangs, where employment is a chimera, poverty a banality and the daily violence of all kinds of trafficking a reality, it's not just a question of looking at objective material conditions, but also at the process of subjectivation, i.e. the way in which individuals themselves feel their place in the relations of production on a daily basis. Acceptance of a “system”, in its self-presupposition, is also regulated by normative principles, values and obligations. Revolt occurs when value judgments and feelings about the way society

works appear to have been transgressed, when the “system” no longer allows for material survival, when the norms and “moral principles” that control and govern “ordinary racism” are exceeded. For the youth of the “hood”, being the “French subaltern” was the norm, but murder, health-police confinement and inflation have upset this norm, the “contract” is broken, attacking the “rival gang” (the state), looting out of necessity or not (but who can define “necessary”) become necessary for the concrete individual then challenged as subject.

Yellow vests, protesters against pension reform, radical ecologists from St. Soline, racialized teenagers from “working-class neighborhoods” all these will not meet, will not “converge” as long as each remains what it is. Nothing could be more pathetic and pitiful than these appeals to the “labor movement” to support the revolt of suburban youth. Marine LePen, Giorgia Meloni, Vox, the AFD and consorts in Europe, Trump, Bolsonaro elsewhere, are in democracy's reserves as a possible counter-fire to a possible, conjunctural, event becoming osmosis not of what was but of what made the Gilets Jaunes, the resistance to pension reform, radical ecologist struggles, the revolt of the racialized poor (whatever their forms of existence around the world). This strange class we call “proletariat” is only constituted when all the oppressed/exploited question what defines them, and not in their demands as such.

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PDF available at haters.life

