

Why run through fields?



Movement against water monopolization. Saturday the 29th, a riotous assault of several thousand of people took place during the forbidden mobilization against the construction of a water reservoir. Sunday the 30th, a group of people sabotaged a pipe, filmed by cameras. The organizers, partisans of an insurrectional eco-populism, had promised as usual a “joyful and determined” demonstration, and indeed they kept their promise. The goal was to reach the crater of the future basin, and indeed it was a successful bet.

A second-hand chief of police tries to congratulate himself, defending the fact that demonstrators were pushed back, and that the occupation of the site was straight away stopped. But the truth is, the police was pushed back, cordon after cordon. The probability of their incompetence takes away from us the certainty of our own efficiency. But the assault was continuous and there was not a blink of an eye for two hours and a half. This determination was not only intense and continuous¹, but it was shared to a degree that we had rarely seen before. How can we explain that? There was a strategical leveling upwards. This is the proof that we can have a high level of strategic thinking.

What kind of speech goes with that kind of event ? Ecologist leaders, trying more or less to fit in, show their support before the demonstration. One of them left the camp with the word «crevure» (scumbag in french) painted on both sides of his car. His more radical colleague explains that this is the cost for defending a governmental ecology instead of a more combative ecology. In the last days, she even spoke of «the water war», and declared Rémi Fraisse (killed in 2014 with a grenade during the protests against the Sivens dam) as its first victim. There is nothing surprising about the fact that the Left always defends the revolution when its too late. A Trotskyist leader is largely applauded as he says that we have to ask ourselves about the possibility of violence. The

¹ Intensity «Beautiful as the fortuitous meeting, on the front seat of a covered truck without a tarpaulin, of a helmet and a stone». (Ouest France, «Drunk, he goes to the camp of the antibassins», October 30, 2022, article reserved for subscribers).

demonstration proved that it's no longer a question. Afterwards, the french Interior Minister doesn't hesitate to speak about eco-terrorism. «This is a blunder» retorted Melenchon's² spokesman, also calling for a republican police force. The Interior Ministry hammers : there will be no ZAD (Zone to Defend) at Sainte-Soline. But nobody had asked the question. Some days seem to be gifted with speech, enabling us to ask questions in a clear and loud voice.

Why run through fields, outflank the police, light them up with some fireworks, cross ditches and hedges, collectively pull ourselves, old and young, through it all?

«It is hostile in the basins». One thing is the reason invoked, which is at the center and dominates, another is the mechanic of revolt. When the revolt puts a foot on a battlefield, it is already something else that is at stake. We have crossed the lines together, regardless of ban, overcoming fear, in contradiction with our own breath, we have slipped through a net designed to be tightened; we alighted in the area of the project by knocking down the last barriers, in the devastated area of a civilized project among millions of others, making two helicopters fly away after having scared the police trucks, and then we had to get out, we had to get away with grenade throws, with LBD shots, in the usual scarce air, and we used the same barriers to protect our retreat. Yes, there is something else at stake.

Yet the day looks furiously like a failed act, a symptom of an era: we reached the objective, and the objective was empty. As if we were more capable of commitment if it's tending towards its degree zero. All pure activists will be happy about it, as they consider revolt as its own end. The others will chit-chat, pretending that any struggle about an ultra-precise question is an extra step towards revolution. But whether they like it or not, thinking politic step-by-step, in other words radical progressivism, has never raised any other questions than those which fit into the governmental logic. With the proliferation of reformist arguments and alibis, the silence of radicals means consent. It feels like revolutionaries themselves, navigating between depression and disorientation, have lost the plot, have lost desire for revolution, only four years after an insurrectional upsurge, which had an echo all over the globe. It's hard to admit. In reality, the revolt knows another kind of step-by-step, it transfigures the ground where it sets foot, and we don't reach the void when we organize for the offensive, we simply reach something else than what was announced, planned or verbalized in advance. So we never participate only in a day of action. Any political participation supposes to take side, to make space for something else to grow. This may seem paradoxical after a day where we have done so well, but we must break with the model of the foot soldier as a form of political subjectivity. A model where we could say for example, that the Soulèvements de la terre³ are the little soldiers of the Peasant Confederation⁴, or other things like that. Subjectivity is indissociably although distinctly being able to say I and to say We. We are not talking about an individual or gregarious self-opinion, but about the central imperative of never giving up the decision, at any level. This means making sure that the meaning of what we are doing is clear. And also formulating it at all costs, taking the risk of misunderstanding, of conflict, rather than revelling, as everything encourages us to do, in confusion and/or half-heartedness.

Today, there is no need to oscillate between the «concrete aspect» of compartmentalized fights and the «abstract» of revolution. It's not even the moment anymore to satisfy ourselves with talks about insurrection (everyone knows that it is a possibility of the present, its very relief, and not a distant horizon). Out of fashion, revolution is now totally relevant. It basically points out the insurrection that we want, that we can wish, against all those that we refuse or that we reject. Every struggle must choose, at the same time as its own path, the side that makes it possible, the space of

2 Jean-Luc Mélenchon is the leader of the French Left in parliament.

3 French organization calling for the mobilization against the famous basins.

4 Agricultural Union participating in the Mega-Basin struggle.

debate where it can grow and that it aims to reinforce. It is the revolutionary debate, this particular strategic field that must be strengthened straight away. Aggregating forces is not enough, we have to bring out a new field of intelligibility, and to assume the rupture with the democratic order. The fear of cleavage, unlike what is often formulated, reinforces the fascist possibility, giving it all the latitude to embody the great cleavage. Why start out the underdog? Why bet on the impossibility, in this era, of aggregating forces in a revolutionary mode, language and perspective? It's taking people for fools. It's believing that overly-used speeches are the most desirable. It's condemning deserters to not knowing what they join when they desert. It's encouraging them to withdraw into ethics, on lifestyle, on family unit, on the individual as a center of gravity – depoliticization. The issue is not the lack of diffuse radicality, but the lack of ideas, of words, of tensions, of obstinacy, of patience, and of «spaces» of organization that take us out of our revolutionary illiteracy – it is indeed a question of relearning what an organization means.

Those who dedicate their lives to political combat cannot abandon themselves to the avant-garde of the contemporary ideological collapse⁵. Let's consider just one thing: the obsession with societal issues, in other words, with sectors of production. The movement against water monopolization is a clear example of it. We are fighting against the monopolization of phreatic table by some peasant oligarchy. And what are we opposing to it? The idea of common good. In other words, we oppose to private monopolization another private one, that has the well-known perversity of being called «public»: the State. The opposition between what is «private» and what belongs to «everyone» has always structured the government of the world, civilization. A good is a property. When one pleads, as it's fashionable today, for the «commons», with very few exceptions, no one seems to be too concerned about getting rid of the background that it all implies : the right of ownership. If at the least some make the effort to separate theoretically “common” and “public”, no one tries to find ways to separate them politically. To get the idea of common out of law, we must at least begin to opt for destitution and de-socialization of issues that matter. We have to put an end to the transformation of our questions into sectors of society. This implies to break-up totally with the revolutionary program of the last two centuries : socialism. Society questions are those which at the same time suppose and provoke the organization into productive sectors. So we should not rush into talking about the issue of water, but we should first ask ourselves: should there be something like a question about water? This element, so intimately linked to life, is politically constructed as a pole that imposes survival. The basic communist issue on this, could instead be formulated this way: what can we do, how can we organize ourselves, not to solve the question of water, but so that the question of water is not one.

The imperative of destitution is what makes a new revolutionary subjectivity, a new us, possible. On one hand, we suggest to give up on all objective foundations of politics: class, gender, race, sexuality, but also territory; on the other hand, we suggest to see in this mourning not an end, nor a confinement in desubjectivation, but the beginning of something else. We gamble neither on a Unique Party of revolt, nor on a plural and unified side of Good. It is about thinking and experiencing the inscription of clear and distinct revolutionary positions in a camp that is unstoppable in its becoming but tied to solid criteria : hatred of institutions, war to the government of the world.

Published in French on November 7th, 2022

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5 We know the ready-made answer to this, the contempt for moralism and for any systemic spirit. But it is precisely when we no longer asks ourselves the question of ideological firmness that we condemn ourselves to feed, by counterweight, the moralistic temptation.