

# **Ecology or Revolution**

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**Story of the protest against  
Sainte-Soline's water reservoir**

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**Why run through fields?**

Sainte-Soline, October 29th, 2022



## Ecology or Revolution

The disaster makes no doubt for anyone anymore. The massive amount of images and speeches about makes us like the world is ending. It looks like exploiting and the putting the world to work lead us straight into catastrophe. And it seems impossible for *civilization* to change its course. We could worry about it. We could also happy about it. What an opportunity, there is nothing to do, no battle to fight. We only have to wait patiently for the economy to continue its work of self-destruction, ending its own millennial reign all by itself. The truth is, no one seems to believe it, we all keep making plans, starting with those accused of the disaster. The future is surely very bleak – there are always a good reason to screw ourselves up or to become completely cynical – but everyone still seems to be betting on it. It's only a matter of time before everyone becomes Eco-friendly. We all know it's not small daily individual actions that will change the deal. A major upheaval is necessary. But which one ? For what kind of future ?

First of all, the collapse of the world has to be translated into the collapse of the dominant model. Ecology mixes up both. By desiring to avoid the first one, it saves the second one by giving it an additional chance to survive. We have to fight alongside everything that resists to devastation, but we must stop talking about ecology. It is a condition to start thinking about revolution.

Ecology is the formulation of a problem in the terms of *power*. Nothing is less perceptible than the structural causes of climate change. We could choose to attack any infrastructure, put an end to the use of any kind of energy, there would still be no guarantee that catastrophies will stop. The *civilization* we are fighting against has developpt an organization of such complexity that it seems unthinkable to interfere in its functioning. Let's stop imagining what would be the best organization for a new society. Another shitty world is always possible.

Ecology is not a battlefield but a large agora where *power* invites all those who want to participate in its next metamorphosis. In other terms, drone agriculture and permaculture participate in side by side to the construction of tomorrow's world. Regardless of the upheavals that are sure to occur, we can be certain that the dominant model is, as usual, restructuring itself. All of today's ecological as so many attempts to bring *power* back to reason. We should not underestimate the capacity of *civilization* to integrate to its political logic any correction that would make it last a little longer.

As long as we speak the language of *power*, its logic will always triumph and future will only be a perpetuation of the present, this infernal reality we experience everyday. A future where devastation is more or less confined thanks to a bunch of engineers ready to do anything, but where the logic of domination and alienation only deepens. This dystopian future makes us vomit.

To act against a future entirely submitted to technology, ecology has however found an answer. We would just have to rediscover an authentic connection to life, to the living. Farming production on a more human scale and respectful of the environment would be a good alternative to industrial modernity and to intensive and destructive agriculture. Because the earth does not lie. This is how the old figure of *civilization*, the peasant, has become a life-savior. We must also get rid of a certain vision of the future, which wants to go back to a past order.

The living is not sacred and is in nothing superior to anything else. There are battles that take place in natural environment reduced to a cement block. They are not less important. We must fight for everything that matters, everything that is irreducible. Some things resist, and mustn't be forced to fit into objective categories created from scratch by biologists. It's precisely by making nature an object that its domination and destruction has been made possible.

*Civilization* was not born with industrial society, it is much older. The easy way to criticize modernity badly hides the fantasy of a past way of life. We must be able to refuse both. A future which frees itself from the past and the present must stop imagining what isn't here, and start refusing what is already here. In other words, we must avoid invoking a "pre *civilized* world", as much as planning what would happen "after *revolution*". To do this, it is essential to stop proposing alternatives that fit perfectly well with *power*, and to stop considering all lives that withdraw themselves from the dominant model as alternatives. The future must remain unknown. It's the only condition to be able to see a future where the dominant model comes to an end.

These last few years, ecology has politicized people by bringing together all the inhabitants of the planet under a common banner. It's supposed to put everyone on the same page : we must save our home planet. But it's hard not to see how this universal project strongly looks a lot like the craziest dream of all fanatics of modernity. The image of the Earth as a visible and united whole was only made possible because one day, some enlightened people found the good idea to walk on the moon.

If there is a lesson to be learned from recent uprisings, such as the yellow vests in France, it is that the battle is not between the side of Good on one side and the side of Evil on the other. Behind the barricade, there are different positions - reactionaries, reformists, revolutionaries...- which cannot reconcile. It is a mistake to believe that divisions, at the expense of unity, weaken the battles. It's quite the opposite, it's a historical banality to notice that revolutionary impulses are often buried by the betrayal of those who one day or another embraced the institutions that they initially fought. It is always the same story that repeats itself. Those who want to improve the dominant model always end up taking over those who want to overthrow it. This is why it is absolutely necessary to make a distinction between these two sides.

Only an insurrectional space-time is able to annihilate the greatest number of dispositives. But we are not condemned to wait. All struggles can be occasions to fight and to build a revolutionary side. The revolutionary side grows in force inside conflictuality and can make History radically shift by destroying the hegemonia of *Civilization*.

Let's meet again on the 25<sup>th</sup> of march in Sainte-Soline, France, or elsewhere so that revolutionary positions can grow.

## **Story of the protest against Sainte-Soline's water reservoir**

On Saturday 30th October, 7000 people gathered to protest against the construction of a Mega-water reservoir in Sainte-Soline. In spite of the presence of 1700 police officers and 6 helicopters, three distinct groups set off and managed to pass through the police cordons until they reached the construction site emptied of all its machines.

This text is a report of saturday, how it went and its stakes.

This weekend, we completely overwhelmed the police force in Sainte-Soline. Their objective was clear: to prevent us from reaching the construction site of the basin. We tore off the gates and reached the protected place. There was nothing much to find, but what we went through to get there will leave a mark on our future combats.

Reaching the construction site seemed complicated. Starting from the base camp, in the middle of the forbidden area, we formed three groups. The police force was quite impressive (at least 1700 cops and 6 helicopters) but it didn't stop us from getting to the basin.

To get there, we had to pass some levels. Level 1, first road, first roadblock, we had to move quickly and set the pace. Level 2, the departmental road, we knew that it would be complicated. Level 3, the road protected by army trucks which later on turned around in panic. Level 4, a road with a ditch to cross. Level 5, the final boss, the well protected construction site.

In fact, it was always the same recipe that worked. Policemen held the ground but moved slowly. In our group, getting 1500 people to move also takes time. We had to find the breaches and hold ground long enough for the whole procession to get through. After a while, we found out the trick, we ran to the right, and then suddenly turned left to outflank them. As soon as a breakthrough was possible, the fastest among us rushed. While some of us attacked the police coming from one side, others held the road and prevented their colleagues from coming from the opposite side. More or less, that was it.

Although it seemed easy, it actually wasn't. We had to hold on and run all together in the fields under the tear gas, we had to get close to force the cordons, we had to dissuade them from charging, we had to run across ditches together, we had to attack their trucks, we had to prevent them from separating us. Level 3 meant a new difficulty for us, and not the least : the police started

to use stun grenades. We were trying to keep moving even with the blasts of the explosions, but we also had to protect ourselves. But we never stopped running, all 1500 of us. As we were getting out of the construction site, the other two groups arrived to help us.

We managed to do something never seen before, crossing cordons several times. Reaching the basin was finally quite symbolic, but our victory over our enemies wasn't at all. No building site to sabotage, no material damage that would prevent them from continuing the construction, but a new state of affairs: if we want to get through, we get through. We have to go to the bottom of this new conclusion and we shouldn't minimize this victory.

From afar, the impulse that has led so many people to overcome themselves in these fields may seem difficult to understand : really, all this for a water-reservoir ? Why take so many risks against this aberration rather than another ? What was at stake here was the possibility to stand up against power. It was the crystallization in a specific point inside a much larger refusal. The 1500 people of Saturday's protest lived one of these moments where something that seemed impossible happened. It could be rational to be disappointed once on the building site : all this for that? But what it opened up for the future is unpredictable.

Many of us have been injured, some have been arrested. This is where the game ends, this is where we have to be strong and support each other so that these intimidations don't weaken our future determination. With victories like Saturday's, those who maintain order will have to defend themselves. We will continue to attack.



## Why run through fields?

Sainte-Soline, October 29th, 2022

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 continuous<sup>1</sup>, 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 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

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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).



blunder" retorted Melenchon's<sup>2</sup> 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

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

the *Soulèvements de la terre*<sup>3</sup> are the little soldiers of the *Peasant Confederation*<sup>4</sup>, 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 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 collapse<sup>5</sup>. Let's consider just

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

4 Agricultural Union participating in the Mega-Basin struggle.

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 ask ourselves the question of ideological firmness that we condemn ourselves to feed, by counterweight, the moralistic temptation.

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.

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