

French students protest police murder of Rémi Fraisse

Francis Dubois
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Two weeks after the murder of the young environmental protestor Rémi Fraisse, killed by an offensive grenade fired by the police, protests against police violence of President François Hollande's Socialist Party government continued over the weekend, despite repression and systematic intimidation by the state.

On November 6, several thousand high school pupils protested in Paris, for the first time since Fraisse's death, against police violence. Thirty Parisian schools were blockaded that day, and similar blockades were installed in Rouen and Limoges.

During the Paris protest, pupils expressed their anger at the recent state violence, the banning of demonstrations and the mass arrests carried out by the police during protests against the murder of Fraisse. The next day, the 20 high schools were still blockaded.

The organisation that initially launched the call to demonstrate, MILI (Independent Joint Struggle Movement), and that came to prominence during demonstrations against the deportation of the Roma school girl, Leonarda Dibrani, in October 2013. It aligned its demands with those of various pseudo-left tendencies: the resignation of the interior minister, the banning of certain “non-lethal” weapons, and “light on and justice for the death of Rémi”.

On Friday, November 7, at 4 a.m., the anti-riot police (CRS) evacuated an encampment installed by several dozen environmentalists on Tuesday night in memory of Fraisse in the centre of Rouen. The CRS demolished the encampment and fired tear gas. The evacuation had been ordered by the justice department at the behest of the local PS-led Town Hall.

On Saturday November 8, demonstrations of several hundreds of people, mostly youth, took place in Toulouse, Rennes and Lille, defying a police ban and

large-scale deployment of riot police. In Rennes, it was the fourth such demonstration since Fraisse's murder. Several dozen arrests took place over the weekend.

In Paris, a demonstration of 1,500 took place with the authorisation of the Paris police chief. Organisations supporting the protest included the Left Party (PG), the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF), the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) and the anti-globalisation movement Attac. The aim of this demonstration was manifestly to protect the government and prevent the development of a movement of youth against its reactionary policies.

The anger directed against police brutality is entirely justified, but the organisers—all of them pseudo-left parties with decades of experience working in the periphery of the PS—had uppermost in their minds the need to dissipate the explosive social tensions building up in France.

While it is clear, and even admitted in various levels of the state, that Fraisse was deliberately killed by an offensive grenade, Jean-Luc Mélenchon's PG asked “that all the truth be brought to light surrounding the circumstances of Rémi Fraisse's death.” This entails leaving the matter in the hands of the state apparatus and the Hollande government.

It asks, like the NPA, for the “resignation of the interior minister Bernard Cazeneuve.” This is a diversion designed to leave the political initiative in the hands of Hollande and his prime minister, Manuel Valls, and therefore to continue their attacks. In a Friday interview on *France Culture*, Mélenchon presented himself as a fervent defender of the bourgeois Republic.

The NPA plays a similar role. Apart from requesting the resignation of the interior minister, with the same objective as the Left Party, it proposes a debate about

how the police should be armed and gives advice to the government on how to win support for its policies. It therefore asks for “the ending of the use of supposedly non-lethal weapons”.

During a debate with a PS deputy defending Cazeneuve, a member of the Strong Right faction of the UMP (Union for a Popular Movement) opposition party, and a police association leader on the National Assembly TV channel LCP, NPA leader Olivier Besancenot accepted the framework of the programme: to discuss the use or not of the so-called non-lethal weapons during demonstrations.

The NPA slogan of “punishing the government on the streets” promotes the illusion that pressure on the government will make it modify its policies, while leaving it in office. In fact, President Hollande made clear in his televised address on November 6 that he will not change his policy directed to serving the needs of crisis-ridden capitalism, and that the attacks against social and democratic rights, jobs and wages are to continue.

While it was embarrassed by the fact that the death of a protester gave a glimpse of what Hollande is preparing for workers and youth who oppose his policies, the government has systematically sought to criminalise protestors—associating them with minority “anarchist” groups infiltrated by state provocateurs, thus justifying the repression of demonstrations and calling into question the right to demonstrate.

The use against demonstrators of the *gendarmierie* police, a military organisation that is equipped in line with this designation—though it has been answerable to the Ministry of the Interior for a few years—is not a coincidence. It is in line with the militarised response of all the European social democratic parties to the social and political opposition to the austerity policies and attacks on democratic rights of the financial oligarchy.

Notwithstanding their manipulation of popular anger against the brutal methods of the state apparatus, the pseudo-left parties are an integral part of this response.

Workers and youth must mobilise independently of the pseudo-left organisations and student unions, which, under the pretext of protesting, defend the Hollande government and its reactionary policies. They must defend their rights on the basis of a political movement to bring down the Hollande government on

a socialist and internationalist perspective.



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