

Body of Steve Caniço, killed in police raid, found in France's Loire River

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1 August 2019

On Monday evening, a river pilot discovered the body of Steve Maia Caniço, who drowned in the Loire River during a violent police raid on a techno music festival at the Quai Wilson in Nantes on June 22.

Dental tests confirmed on Tuesday that the body recovered from the Loire was Caniço's. Cécile de Oliveira, the lawyer of the family, who have filed a civil suit over their son's death, said, "It is Steve's body that has been found." It was discovered by Nicolas Le Bodo, the pilot of a river shuttle, floating near a pontoon boat more than a kilometre from where he was last seen on the night of the festival. This is not surprising, according to de Oliveira, "given the complexity of the effects of the tides and currents of the Loire."

Caniço's death is the result of the violent intervention of the police, and, more broadly, the climate of police impunity cultivated by the ruling class since the establishment of the state of emergency in France in 2015. The response to his death in official circles is a warning of the murderous nature of the police-state measures that the financial aristocracy is employing across Europe. They are directed at workers in France, across Europe and beyond.

Caniço, 24, was an after-school care programme worker at a primary school in Nantes, and was known by staff and students alike as an effervescent and warm young man. The government has callously sought to deny and cover up the role of the police in his death.

Prime Minister Édouard Philippe bluntly declared in a press conference on Tuesday that the internal police investigation had established no clear "link between the intervention of police forces and the disappearance." Philippe proposed an investigation on "the conditions of the organisation of the event by the public authorities, the town hall and prefecture, and the private

organisers."

Pierre Sennès, the public prosecutor in Nantes, expressly refused yesterday to certify the identity of the deceased. However, he announced that the "judicial investigation of the causes of the disappearance" of Caniço had just been "closed by the investigating magistrate." He said he was opening "a judicial investigation of unidentified suspects on the charge of manslaughter."

French public authorities are not trying to bring to light how the police raid killed an innocent man, but to suppress facts and provide a green light to the police to continue deadly violence against rising social opposition. Already in June, Interior Minister Christophe Castaner gave medals to the police officers who killed Zinab Redouane and beat Geneviève Legay during assaults on "yellow vest" protests. President Macron asserted that the most important thing in response to Caniço's death is that "calm must return to the country."

However, damning facts, establishing the role of the police in Caniço's death and exposing the officials defending them, are well known.

Caniço was at the techno festival when the police unit brutally intervened with tasers, tear gas, rubber bullets, and attack dogs, supposedly because the music went on half an hour after its scheduled 4 a.m. conclusion. As a video of the intervention published by *Libération* shows, the crowd shouted "Look out! The Loire is behind!" as the police started shooting. They continued their charge.

Even police officials have questioned the decision by the chief police officer to order the intervention. The head of the SGP-Police union in the Pays de la Loire region, Philippe Bousson, called it an "an insane order," as "one does not intervene at 4:30 a.m. with

twenty police officers amid a thousand potentially intoxicated people for an operation with a rather minor purpose.”

Steve’s friends saw him shortly before the raid, resting between two sound systems. Of the 15 people who fell in the Loire during a panicked rush produced by the police tear gas and charges, only he did not rise to the surface. Steve did not know how to swim. Shortly after the police operation, his phone stopped answering.

The police intervened when the DJs played a punk song, “Porcherie des Bérurier noir,” which is popularly associated with youth protest chants against the fascist right. According to Jérémie Bécue, a chemical operator who fell in the Loire during the police assault, it was when the DJs decided to “put back one last song, an antifa song that everyone knows,” that “the tear gas came. Nothing had been thrown, no projectiles. ... The police gassed without warning.”

Since the police are an electoral base of neo-fascism, the question arises as to whether the intervention was the result of a conscious reaction to the expression of antifascist sentiment.

The murder of an innocent man and the decision of the highest officials to cover it up are provoking anger and fueling a political radicalisation among masses of people in France. Alexane, a delivery worker and friend of Steve’s, said: “When I was a child, I was raised with the image of France as a country of human rights and liberty. But the older I become, the more I find this image distorted. The authorities, the elected officials, everything is fine for them. We, the average citizen, take a step out of line and get a kick out of it.”

Macron’s statement last year that the fascist dictator Philippe Pétain was a “great soldier” was not only a falsification of history. It also expressed the nature of the European bourgeoisie’s response to an international rise in class struggle. The repression of “yellow vests” in France, peaceful voters in the Catalan independence referendum in October 2017, and demonstrators at the G20 in Hamburg makes clear that the financial aristocracy is building violent police states across Europe.

This is directly linked to the growth of social inequality. Following the policy of all capitalist regimes in Europe, Macron has slashed pensions, torn up the working conditions of public employees, cut

social security and other 20th century gains of the working class, in order to enrich the financial elite and fund the military.

Macron admires Pétain because he led a regime that implemented, on a mass scale, the kind of repression that the financial aristocracy now intends to use, in an attempt to crush workers’ opposition to the social counterrevolution it is carrying out.

The Socialist Party (PS) and its periphery are trying to calm the anger caused by Steve Caniço’s death. Johanna Rolland, the PS mayor of Nantes, demanded “precise and public answers” to the questions raised by the police operation “during which...there was a resort to force that seems disproportionate.” Similarly, elected officials from Jean-Luc Melenchon’s Unsubmissive France party, which has close ties to the police unions, took videos of themselves with posters entitled “Where is Steve?”

Steve Caniço’s homicide demonstrates that the rise in military-police violence is rooted in deep social, political and historical problems that cannot be resolved through the tactical changes in policing methods proposed by parties like the PS and LFI. The fight against police violence is inseparable from the struggle by the working class to overthrow capitalism and establish workers’ governments throughout Europe and the world, based on the socialist reorganisation of society.



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