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Next Stop?

ALARM on the August 2011 Riots

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At the top, the rich, in-bred and thick, living off billions their families have been stealing from us. Billion dollar business barons, Royals, church leaders, mass landowners (who ironically own the “slums” we live in through mortgages and loans). On top of that, their idle children are playing at management — after a few years at Oxford they stumble into Parliament and try to envisage how they can make our lives better. They’re supported by spin doctors, heads of unions, judges, lawyers and anyone with a few hundred grand free.

The middle classes stand below them looking up. Barely enough money to survive, they might own a home, be bosses, head teachers, all desperate to join the rich. A few might be “cool” artists or academics — they’re desperate to be anything but the boring middle class fuckers they are. They even bombarded us with shit telly like *Skins*, saying how fun, sexy and smart they are when really they’re just fucking boring.

And then **US**, the ones at the bottom with all the work to do, the ones that have gotta get rid of these above. Clearly none of them have a clue what’s going on, so let’s have it and get rid of them. Sure we’ve got a few nutters too, people that vote Tory and then there’s the sacred lamb of the left, the ‘at the point of production workers’ — a whole 1% of us that are actually building shit. A few bought our houses under Thatcher and made a bit of money but most are in dead end jobs, working in shops selling shit or on the dole — millions of us, our families brought us into the cities with the temptation of wages or as virtual slaves. Now the work has gone and we’ve got nothing to do, sitting here waiting, being hassled, pushed around, some breaking the law and some loving the law, driven half mad by the contradictions of society and just waiting to kick off and change everything.

Activists called for a “Summer of Rage”. They got one. However it’s form and content were totally unexpected. The political dreams and fantasies of activists envisaged a series of militant demonstrations consisting of public sector workers, trade unionists and students. These would lead to clashes with the added possibilities of occupations, a new trade unionism and for the lefties, a Labour administration committed to “Anti-Cut” policies.

So when a summer of rage burst forth in all its "Terrible Beauty", most activists and all of the left were gasping with disbelief and incomprehension. Los Angeles style riots tore through the capital with whole buildings ablaze and disturbances spreading nationwide in four days that shook the body politic. Far from being an unpredictable outburst, we were only surprised they hadn't erupted anytime over the last decade. Make no mistake, these riots, anti-authority uprisings, mass expropriations were the most significant even in 21st century Britain so far.

It's no good activists and leftists throwing up their hands in horror at the intensity of the riots, in particular the mass looting and arson. We leave that to the politicians and the media. This was a class uprising against the police and the whole consumerist edifice. If you think mass looting, attacks on police stations, arson against stores and warehouses, the deliberate trashing of posh coffee shops, restaurants and other places of wealthy consumption is deplorable then you had better retire from class politics and join the Labour Party or a clean-up brigade. It goes without saying that we extend sympathies to all those made homeless or subjected to physical abuse. Nothing negates the amazing spontaneous class uprising, genuine rage with no demands to make of the system. It was mostly the very young, dispossessed and marginalised, overwhelmingly from the oppressed layers and of all races. This was a class uprising far beyond anything seen on the streets of Greece.

Government, police, pundits and the political class were utterly predictable in their reaction. Sentences dished out by the courts were reminiscent of totalitarian states as was the police occupation of London in the aftermath. Also the language employed. . . feral rats, criminal gangs, unmarried mothers, dysfunctional families and according to the historian David Starkey, the white working class becoming "black". We don't condemn the August riots. We see them as a sign of true resistance, a class rebellion, a harbinger of things to come.

If the organised working class or increasingly disaffected sections of the middle class had shown a fraction of the anger exhibited in August, you wouldn't be reading this. Instead you would probably be involved in the ferment of a new social-political movement. No more impotent demonstrations, futile protests, worthless pleas against cuts and "The War".

The students were the exception to this dull litany of protest. It should also be noted that the most important component of last winter's disturbances were the kids from the schools, the colleges of further education and the estates who proclaimed themselves "From The Slums Of London". When the students were hemmed by riot police outside Parliament, the mob gathered at the top of Whitehall began their unchaperoned progress through the West End of London, raising the slogan of "Kill! Kill! Kill the Queen!". Shortly afterwards, the wannabe King was attacked. Nor do we forget the highly successful Black Bloc on March 26th. The trashing of the Ritz was the highest expression of this. It's usually events on the periphery, removed from the set-piece confrontations that open up more possibilities.

If the government wants to prevent riots then the police shouldn't go around killing people. They have learned nothing though. Within a couple of weeks, the police in the normal course of events killed another three people. Meanwhile, prisons are bursting at the seams. Except serious disturbances in the jails. We know more serious conflict on the streets is due, any place, any time, anywhere. There was a massive backlash days after the riots with severe sentences for various misdemeanours, ruling class talks about water cannon, baton rounds and evictions. Soon after came a counter backlash. . . These few days in summer have ignited a massive political debate where it really counts in every household, estate, workplace and on the streets.

August was a clear statement of total rejection by an important section of our class. No more passive demonstrations, rallies outside town halls, listening to the creeps of the left. No return to the slogans of the 30s! For us, the four days of the August uprisings were more eloquent, more important than anything so far in 21st century Britain. So go with the flow, use your imagination, get ready for the storming future.