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France

”The police kill” : let Darmanin come and get us!

- IV Online magazine - 2021 - IV561 - October 2021 -

Publication date: Friday 22 October 2021

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”In the name of the ministry, and to defend the honour of all police officers, I am filing a complaint.” In a tweet published last Thursday morning [14 October], Darmanin announced his intention to go to court against our candidate Philippe Poutou. A desire to intimidate to silence, but also, and perhaps above all, a new illustration of the political pressure that the far right exerts on the current government.

We have to look back at the sequence of events to shed light on the political dynamics that have led the current Minister of the Interior to threaten a presidential candidate, who is also a municipal councillor in a major city.

Dress rehearsal

Last Wednesday (13 October), on France Info TV, Philippe was asked about the words of an elected local councillor of La France insoumise in Cachan (94), Dominique Lanoë: “The purpose of the police is to protect the population, it is not to possess weapons to kill them.” This was in the context of a debate on the use of lethal weapons by the municipal police during a local council meeting at the end of September.

For ten days this provoked agitation from the local right and extreme right, relayed by police unions ... then the controversy broke out by the broadcast of an extract of this council meeting on CNews, going up to Darmanin who, in a letter, denounced “unacceptable comments” ...

Hence the question put to Philippe last Wednesday, who replied: “The police kill, obviously the police kill”. “Steve [Maia Caniço] in Nantes, in Marseille during a demonstration by the Gilets jaunes a lady who was closing her shutters, Rémi Fraisse a few years ago... We would have to see the precise figures, but, in the working class neighbourhoods, it’s about fifteen young people who are killed by the police every year”, repeating “The police have killed and they kill. Afterwards, we can discuss: assassination, murder, accident or blunder, or self-defence of course”...

The far right at the helm

As soon as the programme ended on Wednesday evening, the police unions were unleashed, reacting to our candidate’s remarks on social media. But while it appears that it is indeed the most reactionary who have led the offensive, all of them ended up singing from the same sheet, as shown by the remarks from the various representatives of UNSA-Police or Alternative Police CFDT (unions traditionally classified as close to the Socialist Party) on Thursday on the rolling news channels.

It was (again) on CNews on Thursday morning that a police union representative, Matthieu Valet, spokesman and deputy national secretary of the independent police commissioners’ union, who is used to TV shows, demanded “justice”: “We have elected representatives who make police officers a target. We should not have our hands shaking, Mr. Poutou is the presumed author, for me, of an act of defamation. When one says things that are not true to harm the honour and reputation of the police, one must be prosecuted.”

And Darmanin obeyed shortly afterwards, announcing in a tweet that he had filed a complaint against Philippe for, according to his entourage (relayed by AFP), “public insult”... followed by the announcement by Alliance police nationale, one of the most extreme right-wing unions, that it would be filing a civil suit... Is this the end of the story?

The fascists are angry, but the facts are stubborn

As various articles have shown, particularly one published by *Libération* as part of its “Checknews” column (even quoting sourced figures from the IGPN (Inspection générale de la Police nationale) which are show more deaths than those quoted by our candidate on Wednesday evening) or the work published by [Bastamag](#), Philippe Poutou has only described a sad reality, which has been widely documented elsewhere. Without even mentioning the fact that all this was taking place three days before the 60th anniversary of the massacre of hundreds of Algerians by the French police on 17 October 1961... The reason for the frenzy of the Minister of the Interior, who perhaps tweeted a little too quickly, is therefore to be found elsewhere.

20 October 2021

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