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A French hero

Avis de Tempêtes

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Translated from Avis de tempêtes, anarchist bulletin for social war, issue 4, 15th of April 2018. Published on avisdetempetes.noblogs.org on 16/04/2018

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He's a French gendarme. He belongs to an army corps, and his pride might reside in the fact that he serves one of the rare States which entrusts – in times of peace and day in day out – the tasks of control and repression of the civil population on 95% of the territory to the military. Sure, the motto of the Gendarmerie Nationale, "*For country, honour and law*", isn't as explicit as the one of their transalpine colleagues, "*Loyal over the centuries*", but that never prevented our cops to do without flinching the dirty work when the ruling regime gave the order to do so. Moreover, a motto which stresses more "the law" than the continuity of oppression is surely not a sign of freedom, as an old enemy of all power pointed out: "*the most dreaded tyranny is not the one which takes up the form of the arbitrary, but the one that presents itself with the mask of legality*". To what end then bring up this past of legal barbed-wire internment and then deportation camps, well guarded by well French gendarmes? And anyway, who still recalls their historical studded socks, these regular boots praised in post-war songs on a Java tune? You know, those boots that "get into friendly contact/with an eye or a back/of the bystander who has no purpose" and that "reform-ing the idle youth/wage active propaganda/in the stomach or in the

mouth"? Maybe those same idle youth who were humming a year later out loud the following verses: "seeing those brave cops/being at very close to succumb/me, I pressed foot 'cos I adore them/in the form of dead bodies"? Those who still remember all this, who remember the mounted gendarmes cutting down strikers and the beaters of the mobile brigades during the anarchist walks, are for sure old folks keen on history, zombies of the last century who never called upon state justice and shitted on the celestial one. Luckily, all this has changed. To defend the property of the rich and to preserve the order of dominion by crushing the skulls of protestors is but a bad memory. It's the 21st century, what the heck! And if the boots of the gendarmes continue sometimes to tread on the cracking corps of some poor devil, that's for sure not a consequence of an excess of love for order, because nowadays such a very honourable and very patriotic passion can easily be expressed from a distance. In the form of a volley of rubber bullets of 40mm diameter, tear gas grenades, deafening stun grenades and sting-ball grenades, for example. Too bad for the eyes shot out, the fingers ripped off and the bodies pierced with shrapnel. A true know-how of "democratic crowd control" *à la française*, which gets quite well exported, from Bahrain in full Arab spring in February 2011 (87 dead and hundreds of wounded) until Togo in open revolt against its dictator in October 2017 (16 dead and hundreds of wounded). Yes, they're talented people, those military instructors of the Gendarmerie appointed to international cooperation...

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But frankly, being a gendarme is not but just a way to show power that one's a canine a bit more obedient or disciplined than the others. It offers for example also the possibility to travel around, in spite of the unavoidable annoyances of any travel in battle-grey under the French flag in countries like Iraq, Mali or Afghanistan, where crowds of thankless and hostile subjects give our brave exporters of peace sometimes a hard time. And it offers, let's not hide it, the pleasure of enjoying here, in the heart of our charming coun-

take it away from him, in spite of the bombs and the massacres. He surely also has rendered some "*eminent services*" to the French Nation.

Even until his grave, the gendarme got thus the honours of the medal of state terrorism which he deserved so badly...

ever, without preventing the last death trains getting filled up or leaving the country, like the convoy that left from Toulouse on the 3rd of July 1944 (700 partisans and Spanish republicans) and which crossed the country during 53 days before reaching Germany, like the one which left from Pantin on the 15th of August (2400 political prisoners from all Parisian prisons) or the one which left from Tourcoing on the 1st of September (870 prisoners of Loos).

* * *

*“His striking heroism will arouse,
I believe so, many imitators,
ready to sacrifice themselves for France
and its Christian joy.”*

Canon

The death of this lieutenant-colonel of the Gendarmerie, in spite of his heroisation with great fanfare, didn't sadden or even stirred us, let's speak plainly. But it also didn't rejoice us, and not because that would overstep the thin margins of public expression tolerated still tolerated by power when a terrorist commits an attack. Would this soldier have been a head of state who died in his bed, maybe we could have reacted like Malatesta when a famous tyrant passed away: *“Lenin is dead. Long live freedom.”* Would he have been an officer, a boss or a head of state killed by a revolutionary, yes, then we would have had something to celebrate. But a watchdog of authority killed by another of the same kind (even when the state of this last one is having less success lately), what could that have possibly stirred in us a part from a shrug of shoulders?

During the national tribute at Invalides on the 28th of March, the President also awarded his new here the Legion of Honour posthumously, the award that compensates the *“eminent services”* rendered to the Nation. The same medal adorns the chests of Bachar al-Assad since 2001, and our Chief of state refuses despite all to

tryside and our sparkling housing schemes, a permanent license to kill. A license which is not stupidly restricted to the rules of “self-defence” (we're talking military here!) and therefore lets you get away with it in case of major problems.

By the way, that's how Joseph Guerdner got killed. Three bullets in the back in Draguignan in May 2008, when he was escaping from Gendarmerie quarters, shackled, after having jumped through a window when he was in custody. That's how Rémi Fraise got killed. Beheaded by an offensive grenade in Sivens in October 2014, during a demonstration against the building of a dam. And that's how Jérôme Laronze got killed. Three bullets face on in Sailly in May 2017, when he was on the run after resisting sanitary controls of his livestock. As we haven't got the souls of accountants, we spare you the rest of the list of murders committed by gendarmes who got away with it in the name of those particular rules of engagement.

Anyhow, when some generous hearts then occasionally warm up the virile atmosphere at the barracks by burning there duty vehicles, their personal cars or their scientific laboratory as happened last year, and the choirs of happy imbeciles then pretend to ask themselves *“why?...”*, it doesn't come as a surprise that others rather deepen the question by adding *“... doesn't it happen more often?”*.

* * *

“I do my job, mum, that's all, he often said.”

His mother

“He felt intrinsically gendarme.”

His wife

He was a gendarme.

A soldier who acts on command. He was a human being, obviously, but of a very particular kind. Of those who freely choose to

sacrifice all individuality and become a weapon of war in the hands of the state, a lethal one as well, against all those which the state indifferently labels as enemies. Over here as well as over there. This lieutenant-colonel of the Gendarmerie died on the 23th of March 2018 in a work accident in Trèbes, when he lost his singular duel against the supporter of a competing state. A duel between two soldiers, sharing a same commitment to indiscriminate violence at the service of an almighty power, the one with faith in the Law, the other following the law of his Faith.

At present, this gendarme isn't but a name keyed in the streets and the schools all around the country, a simple name that power intends to transform into a symbol. Because it seems that he was a hero. One of those heroes of French state terrorism, ready for all sacrifices and all missions to satisfy the state: paratrooper at the EPIGN [*Paratrooper Intervention Squad of the Gendarmerie Nationale*], interventions in Iraq, commander in charge of the security of the presidential palace, consultant in "economic intelligence" for a ministry, and ultimately supporting officer of the commander of the Gendarmerie of Aude, for which he organized antiterrorist exercises.

With the death in service of such a loyal employee, the state couldn't resist. It jumped on the occasion to organise a bombastic national tribute to edify the masses, and the idle youth in particular. Indeed, what can be more exemplary for authority than a person who doesn't hesitate to risk his life, not as a singular individual and in the name of his own ideas, but as a soldier and in the name of the country, this story that unites rulers and ruled in the same melting pot of submission? During his speech at the Invalides, the head of state therefore praised as is right and proper his quality as a cog of the coldest of cold monsters ("he was committed and swore to form one body with something bigger and higher... serving France"), before daring in a surge the most audacious and dreadful comparisons.

Because if military legends like the one of an ex-shepherdess crowning a King or of an exiled general in London may well stir up the fantasies of those who have the French colours where usually the brains are located, it is a whole different endeavour to annex the determination of "the *partisans of the maquis*" or of the "Justes" to the one of the lieutenant-colonel of the Gendarmerie, modern hero of the war on terrorism.

Should we recall that most of the Justes were singular individuals who, in a minority way but with a very personal and dissident conscience, risked their lives and their freedom confronting the law which the gendarmes were applying? The main internment camp for deportation towards the Nazi concentration camps, where 9 out of 10 Jews who were deported from France (67 000) were processed, was the camp of Drancy. And who was in charge of it? The Gendarmerie. And who escorted until 1943, in the company of German soldiers, these convoys heading straight for Auschwitz? Again, the Gendarmerie. And who was in charge of the tracking of Jews in the city (during the raids of Vel d'Hiv in 1942 for example) as well as on the countryside, at the same moment when the *Justes* risked their necks to hide them from the men in uniform? Oh yes, yet again the Gendarmerie.

And concerning the "*partisans of the maquis*" shamelessly evoked during the presidential tribute to this lieutenant-colonel who died during a work accident, well, not only were they officially declared "terrorists" by the French state, and as such they got also killed, detained, beaten up or handed over to the Gestapo, and in particular by the Gendarmerie. At the polar opposite of the Gendarmerie which consisted of little soldiers moved by sacred obedience to the Law whatever it might say, the *maquisards* were outlaws who took up arms violating the monopoly of legitimate violence of the state and who, by the way, didn't hesitate to finish off this or that cop. Obviously we are talking about the years before 1944, before the outcome became clear and many gendarmes and policemen started to change sides or to play both sides... how-