

The Refusal to Be Ruled

Theme intro

Fifth Estate Collective

2017

Revolutions, Revolts, Riots, and Rebellions have been a constant in human affairs since the emergence of the state 8,000 years ago. They are popular responses to life being administered by a political apparatus which governs on behalf of a class of rulers. They are sometimes planned; other times, spontaneous.

Without the repressive mechanism of the state—the cops and army—to stop insurgencies, the power, privilege, and wealth of those in the elite caste would quickly be dispersed. The state ultimately rests upon and depends upon this stratum of force to assure social relations of rulers and ruled are maintained intact.

The prevalence of social disturbances throughout history, including the ultimate disruption, revolution, suggests how close to the surface is dissatisfaction with class society. The mechanisms of power maintenance are enforced in all state societies through structures of mass psychology of passivity and obedience and religious and social mythology. When these methods fail, state violence is employed to dispatch the dissidents.

Even though most refusals to be ruled have been quashed over the millennia, no matter how much people in a given era appear to be domesticated to power displaying a willingness to submit, there is something seemingly inherent in the human psyche that revolts against submission.

Not all uprisings have had admirable intent and very few have been successful, but we celebrate the spirit of revolution in the individual and society, and encourage its outbreak until all are free.

Given the extensive occurrence of Revolutions, Revolts, Riots, and Rebellions, what we present in this section cannot even claim to scratch the surface of their legacy. The articles in this section are but a few examples from our epoch of events that shook the foundations of class rule, if in some instances, for only a few days.

But, what was possible in a factory a hundred years ago, in the streets of a major U.S. city 50 years past, or what has occurred in recent years, suggests that for all the efforts of the rulers, some still say, “We will not be governed!”

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