

## Forget About Elections Once and For All!

by Alain Badiou

I understand the bitterness of those protesting against the election results in France—in particular those disappointed by Mélenchon following the first round of voting. Having said this, however, they have said and done what they could: there was no fraud in this election, no particular aberration.

In fact, there were only two party-political anomalies, which have unfortunately (for the real powers that be) resulted in the decomposition of the central parliamentary bloc, made up of the classic Right and Left. For forty years, for two centuries even, it is this bloc that has supported the development of local capitalism. Now, the local incumbent of the supposed left, Hollande, did not run, which split up his party. On the other hand, the classic Right, because of the disastrous primaries, did not bet on its best old horse, Juppé, but on the sad figure of a provincial bourgeois, too distanced from the ‘societal’ delicacies of modern capitalism.

‘Normally’, the second round would have been Hollande/Juppé, or at worst Le Pen/Juppé—in both cases an easy win for Juppé. In the absence of the two government parties, as they fell apart, our true masters for two centuries—namely, the owners and managers of capital, were a little lost. But happily (for them) with their usual personal politics, the old veterans of reaction, along with (of course) the help of the social-democratic residue (Valls, Le Drian, Ségolène Royal et al), have cobbled together a presentable substitute for the decohering central parliamentary bloc. That’s what Macron is. What they also did—something very useful, and which will have great importance going forward—is to rally Bayrou, the old experienced centrist sage,

a man of many electoral battles, even the most difficult. All of this was done with great brio, in record time. Success in the end is practically guaranteed.

In these conditions, entirely understandably, the vote confirms, more clearly than usual, that pro-capitalist rightist subjectivity, including in its somewhat fascistoid forms, is absolutely in the majority in France.

Some of the country's intellectuals, and some of its youth, refuse to see it, or bitterly complain about it. What then? Do they, these lovers of democratic elections, want to change the electorate as one changes a dirty shirt? Whoever votes must consent to the will of the majority, after all! In truth, these two groups see the world according to their own situation and their own dreams, without drawing the inevitable conclusion: we can expect absolutely nothing from the 'democratic' vote.

Already in 1850, Napoleon III could see that universal suffrage was not the horror that the right-thinking bourgeoisie imagined it was, but a veritable blessing, an unexpected and precious legitimation for reactionary powers. And this is still true today, throughout the world. 'Napoleon the Little' discovered that, in anything like normal, stable historical conditions, the numerical majority is always fundamentally conservative.

Let's draw the conclusion calmly. Getting hysterical about the results of an election leads to nothing but pointless depression. We need to get used to it: we will never put an end to our servitude without—above and beyond electoral rituals—the historical coming-together of four factors:

1. An unstable historical situation, which strongly shakes up conservative subjectivities. Alas, this probably means a war—as for the Paris Commune of 1871, the Russian Revolution in 1917, and the Chinese Revolution between 1937 and 1947.

2. A strongly established ideological division, naturally first of all amongst intellectuals, but ultimately amongst the masses themselves, a conviction that there are two ways and not just one, that the whole space of political thought must be structured around the antagonistic contradiction capitalism/communism, or some equivalent of these. Let me recall in passing the principles of the second way: the establishment, against private property, of collective forms of the management of the means of production, of credit and exchanges; a polymorphy of labour, something that in particular is undermined by the opposition between manual and intellectual labour; internationalism as a consequence; and forms of popular control working toward the end of the separate State.

3. A popular uprising—certainly, as always, the uprising of a minority, but one which at least suspends the power of the State, an uprising often connected to point (1) above.

4. A solid organisation capable of proposing an active synthesis of the three first points, in the direction of a quashing of the enemy and the putting into place, as quickly as possible, of the constitutive elements of the second way, the communist way—those elements enumerated above.

Two of these four points, (1) and (3), depend on the conjuncture. But from this point on, we must work actively on point (2), which is absolutely crucial. And we can also work on point (4), in particular, in the light shed by point (2), by holding common meetings and actions between some of the intellectuals on one hand, and on the other hand the proletariat in three of its current forms: active workers and staff, working families stricken and demoralised by the frenetic de-industrialisation of France over the past thirty years, and the nomad proletariat, whether from Africa, the Middle East, or Asia.

To get hysterical about the election results, in an at once declamatory and depressed fashion, is not only futile—it is positively harmful. It amounts to placing oneself squarely upon the terrain of the adversary, with no recourse. We must become indifferent to elections, which, at most, relate to a purely tactical choice between: abstaining from participation in this ‘democratic’ fiction, or supporting this or that competitor for circumstantial reasons—which, precisely, we must define according to the context of a communist politics—a context which has nothing to do with State rituals of power. Our time, which is always precious, must be dedicated to the true hard work of politics, which can only be pursued through the four points set out above.