

The May Events: From Practice to Theory

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Preface

These translations of documents collected on the streets of Paris in May 1968 were intended for inclusion in a book later published as *When Poetry Ruled the Streets*. In the end, they were not published in that book but have been posted to the May Events Archive at <http://edocs.lib.sfu.ca/projects/mai68/> where the originals can also be found.

The texts were selected for their theoretical interest. While the May Events lives on in memory primarily through scenes of violence in the streets of Paris, a great deal of serious debate was also going on. The debates inspired the production of significant documents. It is unfortunate that Marxists have not yet learned the lessons of May. This was the last great anti-capitalist uprising in the West but it is treated as a symbol rather than analyzed as a historical experience. These documents offer hints of what those lessons are.

Perhaps the most unexpected revelation of the May Events was the potential for collaboration between professional and technical personnel and a socialist mass movement. The documents offer analyses of this phenomenon based on traditional Marxist notions and innovative approaches that break with that tradition to focus on the emergence of new class relations. The picture that emerges provides perspective on many later struggles in which radical professionals, scientists and technologists have collaborated with left movements. It also suggests the possibility of a new mode of socialist governance based on permanent dialogue between technical experts and those they nominally serve.

I begin with an article I composed entitled "Anti-Technocratic Struggle in the French May Events of 1968: An Essay in Retrieval." Eleven translations with accompanying commentaries follow.

Table of Contents

Preface 2

Introduction: "Anti-Technocratic Struggle in the French May Events of 1968: An Essay in Retrieval." 4

Translations

I. New Forms of Action	17
1. "Critical University"	19
2. "A Manifesto for Educated Labor"	31
3. "Journal of a Neighborhood Action Committee"	34
4. "A New Form of Organization in the Factories: Rank and File Committees"	44
5. "The University as a Red Base"	54
6. "Nantes: A Whole Town Discovers the Power of the People."	58
7. "From Roadblocks to Self-Defense"	65
II. An Unsolved Theoretical Problem: The Middle Strata	71
8. "The Foundations of Leftist Ideology"	77
9. "Revolt and Revolution"	95
10. "The Student Movement between the Struggle against the Exploitation of the Proletariat and the Critique of Consumer Society"	113
III. Future Prospects	141
11. "Bourgeois Elections or Revolutionary Action"	145

Anti-Technocratic Struggle in the French May Events of 1968: an Essay in Retrieval

Andrew Feenberg

The beginning of the May '68 Events coincided with a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) conference on Marx.¹ This conference brought Marx scholars from all over the world to Paris, where they could witness the first stirrings of a revolution while debating the continuing validity of Marx's work. I recall meeting one of these scholars, a prominent Italian Marxist, in the courtyard of the Sorbonne. He recognized me from my association with Herbert Marcuse, who was also at the UNESCO conference. I expected him to be enthusiastic in his support of the extraordinary movement unfolding around him, but on the contrary, he ridiculed the students. Their movement, he said, was a carnival, not a real revolution.

How many serious minded people of both the left and the right have echoed these sentiments until they have taken on the air of common sense! The May '68 Events, we are supposed to believe, were not real, were a mere pantomime. And worse yet, *La Pensée '68* is to blame for much that is wrong with France today.

I consider such views of the May Events profoundly wrong. What they ignore is the political content of the movement, which was not just a vastly overblown student prank. I believe the mainstream of the movement had a political conception, one that was perhaps not realistic in terms of power politics, but significant for establishing the horizon of progressive politics since the 1960s. I will present this argument by discussing leaflets from the May Events Archive at Simon Fraser University.² I will conclude by reflecting on the meaning of the politics invented during the May Events and its significance for us today.

Before proceeding it is necessary to make the criteria of my choices explicit. Participants interpreted the Events very differently. Leninist organizations,

derisively called "*groupuscules*," posed as revolutionary leaders of a classic proletarian revolution although most of their members were students. But although nearly 10 million workers joined the movement in a general strike, a Bolshevik style take-over seemed implausible to most of those one talked to in the streets. The idea that a vanguard could give tactical leadership presupposed a very different dynamic than the one actually in place in May and June of 1968. The spirit of the movement was better expressed by groups that can be loosely described as anarchist, such as the March 22nd Movement and the Situationists. But these groups had no real grip on the political process, especially since they were unknown to the workers.

Of course my view of the Events was limited by the nature of my involvement. I participated in the student movement daily in Paris from early May to the end of June. I was present at many demonstrations, including demonstrations of solidarity with striking workers. I sang the *Internationale* with the workers of Renault-Billancourt, not that I can be sure they knew why we had come to visit them at their occupied factory. Not only is my viewpoint biased by this mode of participation in the movement, but my access to speeches and documents which influence my interpretation has certainly reinforced that bias.

No doubt it is difficult to generalize about a mass movement. It is easier to know what the Maoist and Trotskyist sects wanted because they had a party line. I identify what I call the mainstream of the movement not with a line so much as with the most widespread interpretation of the actual unfolding of the Events evident in the accompanying flurry of leaflets and student publications. I concede that it is also difficult to know to what extent workers shared this interpretation, but a surprising number showed up at the Sorbonne and in the Latin Quarter to protest side by side with the students.

Reading the leaflets and ephemeral newspapers of the time, and recalling

conversations with participants has convinced me that the movement was not a classical struggle for power. Instead it was a protest against the emerging advanced capitalist society in its repressive French version, rather than a struggle for power in the classical sense. The protest took the form of a revolutionary movement, a familiar form in the French context, and it could have led to a seizure of power for that reason. But political strategy was not essential. The movement was primarily about something else. It demanded a more meaningful and fulfilling way of life than an American style consumer society, and a more democratic and participatory practice of administration than French elites were willing to concede. Most of the ideologically sophisticated participants would have said they sought a self-managing socialist alternative. Although not everyone would have agreed, this was certainly a commonplace view not confined to a small sect.

Although it is often said now that the student and workers' movements were entirely different and at cross purposes, I do not believe this was so. Workers, students, and a large section of the middle strata had a common demand for dignity and respect which showed up in the political rhetoric of their movements. The workers' protest was strongly colored by a sense of frustration and outrage. Economic demands were deemed insufficient by themselves because low wages were experienced as part of a pattern of disrespect, not just as material deprivation. Some subsequent sociological research confirms this. The very steep hierarchies in French bureaucracies were also an object of protest even by those privileged to hold good positions. This affected the students who were sensitive not only to the injustice done the working class but also to their own problematic future. One law student in suit and tie I met on the barricades told me, "This is my last chance to avoid becoming a bureaucrat."

Finally, I find it absurd to claim that the May Events was merely an explosion of

narcissism for which *la pauvre France* is paying to this day. The claim that the movement was really about sexual license may be due to a confusion of the aftermath with the actual Events. Defeated revolutions kill hope and give rise to individualistic solutions to social problems. Before attributing libertinage to the May '68 Events it would be a good idea to reread the first chapter of de Musset's *La confession d'un enfant du siècle*. He describes the post-Napoleonic youth very much as post-'68 youth have been described by reactionary commentators in recent years. All this is not to deny that a lot of sexual activity accompanied the protests. But since when has this been an issue in France?

It is still puzzling that such a violent reaction could make sense to large numbers of usually peaceful individuals. The surface causes are of course known, such things as the development of mass higher education and harsh repression of labor under de Gaulle, but what common condition made it possible for the movement to spread from one group to another until it embraced the entire country? I believe that the key element was the emergence of a new kind of technocratic administration, perhaps less developed than in the United States but more shocking in the traditional and ideologically polarized French political landscape. The struggle against technocracy provided a unifying theme, what Laclau and Mouffe call an "articulation" of diverse struggles.³

Let me turn now to some texts which illustrate this theme. The first text offers a good example of the anti-technocratic discourse of the time.

"Let's categorically refuse the ideology of PROFIT, of PROGRESS or other pseudo-forces of the same type. *Progress will be what we want it to be*. Let's refuse the trap of luxury and necessity—the stereotyped needs imposed separately on all, to make each worker labour in the name of the 'natural laws' of the economy ...

"WORKERS of every kind, let's not be duped. Do not confuse the TECHNICAL

division of labor and the HIERARCHY of authority and power. The first is necessary, the second is superfluous and should be replaced by an equal exchange of our work and services within a liberated society.”⁴

This leaflet was very widely distributed early in May and became something of a manifesto of the movement. It explicitly criticized the technocratic ideology of modernization that was so influential in France in the 1960s. The students were directly implicated in this process since they were training to manage the new system. But for the moment they were suffering a repression similar to what workers suffered. The parallel was interpreted as a basis for unity by the students. Many of the early leaflets reflected this sudden discovery of solidarity. Here is one such example:

“Your struggle and ours are convergent. It is necessary to destroy everything that isolates us from each other (habits, the newspapers, etc.) It is necessary to bring the firms together with the occupied colleges.”⁵

It is true that there was unemployment among graduates at this time. This was certainly a cause for anxiety, but that anxiety did not express itself merely in aggressive careerism as it does today. On the contrary, it shaped an intention to radically transform the society in order to create a very different future. This was the theme of many student leaflets. Here are some examples.

“We refuse to be scholars cut off from social reality. We refuse to be used for the profit of the ruling class. We want to suppress the separation between the work of conception and reflection and organization. We want to build a classless society...”⁶

“The university and high school students, the unemployed youth, professors and workers have not struggled side by side on the barricades last Friday to save a university in the exclusive service of the interests of the bourgeoisie: This is a whole generation of future executives who refuse to be the planners of the needs

of the bourgeoisie and the agents of exploitation and repression of the workers.”⁷

These leaflets contain a critique of both management and scholarship, the two futures to which studies lead. The students rejected both as complicit with a technocratic system of oppression which they hoped to destroy. The reasons for their rage are expressed here not simply in terms of the classic Marxist problem of exploitation but also in terms of a much more sophisticated critique of the separation of conception and execution. The students called for the suppression of the division of mental and manual labor, a utopian goal with particular relevance to the condition of modern technocratic societies, both communist and capitalist.

These texts might still be considered marginal to the extent that students themselves are marginal. However, the anti-technocratic impulse of the movement spread to the technocracy itself. There were strikes throughout the government administrations and even among business executives in many companies. The goals of the strikes were often articulated in terms that reflected the students' critique of their own future social role. Here are a couple of texts that reflect this. The first was issued by the civil servants of the Ministry of Finance. I quote:

“While the students rose in all the universities of France and ten million strikers united against the iniquities of the economic system, the prodigious popular movement of May '68 touched the civil servants of the principal ministries, where traditional administrative structures have been profoundly shaken.

“The personnel assembly of the central administration of economy and finances,

meeting the 21st of May, decided to continue the strike. At the Ministry of Finances, as in the majority of associated services and at the National Institute of

Statistics, the civil servants stopped work and occupied their offices.

"May 21, a demonstration in the rue de Rivoli drew 500 civil servants from Finances demanding an administration in the service of the people and a 'radical change of economic and social policy.'"⁸

The second text comes from a leaflet distributed by the strikers at the Ministry of Equipment. The authors write,

"As civil servants in the service of the community, we have become paradoxically, and for many of us against our will, the symbol of red tape. As a result of an erroneous conception of the role of the Administration and the lack of consultation in decision-making and implementation, instead of being the driving force of Urban Affairs and Housing, we are the brakes that everyone would like to see disappear."⁹

These are examples of the self-critique that developed in the administrative strata of French society in 1968. In these texts the technocrats themselves call on the government to radically restructure the administration and to change the policies that guide it.

These themes of middle-class rebellion were echoed by some workers, a social stratum far less privileged and far more dangerous to the system. It was their participation in the movement that made it a serious challenge to the government. It may well be true that a majority of workers did not favor revolution in 1968, but it is also certain that a large minority did support the students and entertained very radical goals. This, in the context of a militant general strike, defies cynical critique after the fact.

The second-largest union federation, the *Confederation française démocratique du travail* (CFDT), was especially responsive to the student movement. This union primarily represented technicians and skilled workers. It was more open to new and radical ideas than the Communist-led union which

represented the majority of unionized unskilled workers. With the CFDT, we have a large, official union federation calling on the working-class to seize the breakdown in the universities and administrations as an occasion for ending top-down control and substituting self-management. Here is a passage from a leaflet the CFDT distributed to workers early in the development of the strikes.

“The intolerable constraints and structures against which the students have rebelled exist similarly and in an even more intolerable fashion in the factories, construction sites, and offices...

“The government gave in to the students. To freedom in the universities should correspond freedom in business enterprises. For industrial and administrative monarchy, democratic structures based on self-management must be substituted.

The Moment has Come to Act.”¹⁰

What was meant by self-management? Were the students and their allies really conscious of the meaning of this slogan? There is a whole tradition of paternalistic commentary on the May '68 Events that denies the movement self-awareness, but I think the students and workers of the time knew as much as we do now about the meaning of self-management; they do not deserve our condescension. There is plenty of evidence for this in the leaflets.

As the May '68 Events wound down, the Revolutionary Action Committee of the Sorbonne published a brochure containing leaflets it had composed in the course of the movement accompanied by commentaries on their use. These leaflets were distributed in hundreds of thousands of copies, some of them in the streets, and others at factories. They articulated a specific strategy, the strategy of the active strike leading to a revolution based on self-managed worker-controlled firms. This was the radical alternative that was put forward by those activists who were fully committed to restructuring French society.

I will consider here one of their major leaflets. In their commentary the authors

explain that they distributed 30,000 copies of this leaflet in factories on May 28 as a basis for discussion amongst workers. The leaflet called on the workers to seize power on the workplace. The idea was to substitute the demand for self-management for the wage demands of the unions and Communist Party. That this was feasible and not simply a fantasy is shown by the fact that workers had in fact already seized hundreds of factories and locked out management, in some cases continuing to operate the machines on their own as a public service. The number of factories occupied was so large and the situation so explosive that the government was hesitant to use force to throw the workers out. They saw the occupations as a political problem, which it was. The workers too appreciated the political significance of their own action and in some cases made no wage demands at all but simply hung a red flag on the factory gate in expectation of the revolution.

The leaflet began by rejecting the option of a popular front government, that is to say, a government of Socialists and Communists substituting itself for the Gaullists. A popular front or a union settlement would leave the basic structure of society unchanged. The only effective way of altering the system, the leaflet argued, would be to prove that socialism was possible in practice starting out in each individual factory.

I quote,

“Comrades, the factory occupations should now signify that you are capable of making them function without the bourgeois structures which exploited you....Insure production, distribution so that the whole of the working class demonstrates that a workers’ power owning its own means of production can create a real socialist economy....Practically speaking self-management consists in the worker comrades operating their factories BY and FOR Themselves, and consequently suppressing the hierarchy of wages as well as the notions of salary

earners and bosses.”¹¹

The leaflet goes on to explain that production should be started up again and coordinated regionally, nationally, and even internationally. To prevent bureaucratization, the councils should be elected and their officers rotated. The authors of the leaflet were quite clear about not wanting socialism in France to resemble Russian Communism. They conclude, “Show that workers’ management in the firms is the power to do better for everyone what the capitalists did scandalously for the few.”¹²

Obviously the strategy did not take hold but that does not mean that it was without influence. On the contrary, for ten years, from 1968 to in 1978, self-management was the central theme of left political discourse in France. The Socialist Party in particular co-opted that theme and promised to promote self-management once in power. Although at first it bitterly resisted, even the Communist Party eventually used the idea of self-management to win votes. Of course these parties were not serious advocates of council communism, but they created an ambiguity around their position in order to benefit from the popularity of the notion of democratizing industrialism. I think it would be a mistake to see these ideas as falling stillborn on hostile soil. Their failure was not due to public indifference but to more complex causes rooted in the history of the French left after 1968.

I want to conclude very briefly by reflecting on the significance of these ideas today. If we see the May ‘68 Events as a failed Leninist coup or an outburst of juvenile narcissism they would appear to be a complete failure. They do not look much more interesting as a final replay of the old Marxist schema of proletarian revolution, the language of which was borrowed by nearly everyone in the movement. But I believe there is something else going on under the surface of the Marxist language that is still relevant today. This is the anti-technocratic critique I

have highlighted here.

In saying this I do not want to claim that the May '68 Events held the solution to the problem of technocracy in its hands. It is of course still quite uncertain that the attack on technocracy from above in the student movement and the administrations could have been successfully coordinated with the attack on capitalism from below in the radical wing of the workers' movement. The idea of self-management put forward in 1968 remains abstract and speculative. But precisely because the Events were unsuccessful, we do not need to know if they could have solved this thorny problem. What we do know is that the May '68 Events launched a whole new approach to politics that lives to this day. This approach is anti-technocratic and refuses the alibi of progress for every new means of concentrating power in a few hands. The echoes of this new approach in other advanced countries have had a permanent impact on our understanding of the political. The spread of a rebellious spirit from familiar issues such as racial and gender discrimination to technology has born fruit in the many social movements around technical issues in such different domains as medicine, computerization and the environment.

Here are some examples. AIDS patients challenged the medical establishment to extend opportunities to participate in experiments, and to modify experimental designs to better conform to patients' needs. The struggles resulted in significant reforms. The Internet has been largely shaped by users and hackers; still today popular resistance to business strategies plays an important role in decisions about its future. The environmental movement is without doubt the most powerful of these new movements and has had a tremendous impact on production and public attitudes. These unprecedented struggles and innovations testify to a growing will on the part of the citizens of advanced societies to control their own technical destiny.

I think Sartre had the deepest insight into the May '68 Events when he described them in speeches and articles as "enlarging the field of the possible" (Sartre 62-63). The Events lifted the barriers to imaginatively approaching the many technical and administrative obstacles to democratic participation in advanced societies. Self-management as a regulative ideal, if not a political goal, lives on in the radical politics that has continued with ups and downs since 1968.

This enlargement of the field of the possible has had philosophical as well as political consequences. Since positivistic and technocratic ideologies limited the social imaginary, an attack on these limits appeared as an attack on a certain conception of rationality which, for the first time, became a political issue. The critique of the notion of neutral, universal, and asocial reason developing among isolated intellectuals such as Marcuse and Foucault was thereby promoted suddenly and to the surprise of the critics themselves, into a politics under the banner of which mass demonstrations were organized. Modifying the old anarchist slogan, "Ni dieu ni maître,"—« Neither God nor master »—a student turned it into a critique of technocracy and wrote on the wall of the Sorbonne, "Ni dieu, ni mètre."—Neither God nor the meter stick." The May '68 Events created the social conditions for the so-called postmodern period in which rationality has become an object of general critique.

To conclude, let me put this point another way. We are familiar today with two main kinds of politics in our society. They are: an instrumental politics which aims at power, laws, and institutions; and an identity politics through which individuals attempt to redefine their social roles and their place in society. I would argue that the May '68 Events represent a third kind of politics which I call a civilizational politics, a politics of civilizational identity. The questions of this politics are: what kind of people are we, what can we expect as a basic minimum level of justice and equality in our affairs? The May '68 Events replied that we cannot go on as before.

It is not a question of generosity or personal self sacrifice but concerns a larger sense of who and what we are. From that standpoint we must acknowledge the mediocrity of consumer society and the injustices at its basis. Ideologies that stand in the way, even if they be identified with rationality itself, must be overthrown. Recall the first leaflet from which I quoted the following passage: "Progress will be what we want it to be." That I think is the main message of the May events and it is not exhausted. I hope that someday it will be picked up again and the utopian vision of May '68 made real.

Part I: New Forms of Action

The seven documents in this section represent new forms of struggle and the critique of consumer society both in the student movement and among executives and engineers, privileged but dissatisfied members of that society.

[Introduction]

The students in the Law Faculty, along with those of Political Science have the reputation of being the most bourgeois in France. In these schools at the time of the May Events there were many Gaullists, not to mention a scattering of monarchists and fascists. But even here the May movement provoked a violent revolutionary politicization. Undoubtedly, these were the schools from which came those revolutionaries in three piece suits with fleur-de-lis in their lapels one sometimes saw tossing cobblestones at the police.

The following text was published by the Strike Committee of the Law Faculty as the conclusion to a long pamphlet of reform proposals concerning every aspect of legal education in France. Perhaps because of their moderate political backgrounds, these students were especially concerned to define in advance and rather formalistically the institutions of a free socialist society, the rights that everyone should be able to enjoy in a nation transfigured by revolution. However, the desire to unite socialism and freedom, was not confined to the Law Faculty during May, but quickly became one of the central themes of the movement.

[Document]

CRITICAL UNIVERSITY

Law-Economics Paris, 1968 Strike Committee Political Texts

Proposed by the Various Commissions

A. LAW REFORM COMMISSION:

"REFLECTIONS ON THE MEANING OF THE MOVEMENT"

This is a report offered by the members of a Law commission. The Strike Committee considers it a useful basis for reflection on the meaning of the movement.

One of the first lessons of the student revolt was the refusal to enclose the future in rigid alternatives within pre-established frameworks. This requires the rejection of a closed problematic deriving from a schema based on an apparently unassailable logic. The theory has been refuted according to which industrial society, by its very nature and stage of development, necessarily secretes the inevitable evils of technocracy, bureaucracy, centralization. We reject an approach which presents the present structures as the only realistic and logical ones given the narrowness of the economic margin of maneuver, the necessary technicity of tasks, the complexity of cases. Every society tends to consider itself to be the only one possible; the Events have shown that the response to this has been an intellectual and political explosion of such a nature as to broaden the range of possibilities.

I. Critical analysis of the present society

-it is a profit society in that its economic system is founded on productive activities oriented toward maximum profits for the owners of the means of production, and not toward the most urgent human and social needs. Also, since profit is based on sales, its realization requires a refashioning of the mind of the consumer, an insidious persuasive activity valorizing the established social model.

-it is alienating for man in the sense that it considers him only in terms of his separate statuses as a producer and a consumer, thereby denying his deepest personality which is irreducible to any categorization, and refusing him the status of autonomous and free subject endowed with original values.

This society secretes a government which asserts its right to guide the economic and political activities of the country according to procedures of dubious validity.

Paternalistic, it knows how to mete out a measure of liberalism to insure its survival. At the first crisis it collapses and discovers that its rigidity has given it the illusion of stability.

It then alternates liberalism and threats and soon discovers itself to be authoritarian. The police apparatus ceases to be the guarantor of public order and becomes the instrument of a repression as excessive as it is ineffective. Far from crushing contestation, the repression crystallizes it and mobilizes aspirations forbidden expression by the rigidity of the social structure. The logic of the structures of the present society is in crisis; this should lead to the formulation of new strategies and principles.

II. The Aspirations of the Movement

The aspirations of the movement crystallize around several values clearly revealed by the analysis of the events. It would be an error to consider the generalization of protest and its various forms, from street demonstrations to

factory strikes, as a juxtaposition of mutually unrelated discontents. Rather, we consider the grass roots spontaneity of the movement to be its most significant characteristic. Neither tardy reformism nor hasty negotiations disarmed what we consider our common aspirations, as follows:

-*contestation*, which presupposes a global view of social problems as the necessary condition for a relevant challenge to the basic postulates of the society. It is opposed to the present tendency to break problems down into parts, to consider them in isolation from the background of their preconditions.

-*participation*, which implies that at every level of his activity everyone can influence the decisions which concern him. Structures permitting the flowering of responsibility should be available to the student in the framework of the university, the worker in the framework of the company, the citizen in the framework of the city, the region and the Nation.

-the right to *create*. Imagination must be substituted for passive consumption at work and leisure, artificially imposed by an alienating society.

-*solidarity* is based on the postulate according to which no man is free so long as another man suffers the burden of oppression. . . .

These values to which the movement is committed imply a *socialist democracy* because contestation and participation can only be effective and influential if they can act directly on the means of production. To envisage another solution would be to condemn oneself to a sterile exercise functioning in a vacuum.

An economic and social system of a *socialist type* implies on the one hand that the workers themselves take in hand the management of the economic unit to which they belong, and on the other hand, State planning of the activity of its firms, oriented toward the satisfaction of man's priority needs. However, even though socialism is the condition for the flowering of the above-mentioned values, it does not guarantee their realization. Contemporary socialist models are not

always protected from totalitarian projects.

Political power must respect pluralistic principles in practice, which automatically presupposes contestation and participation. Thus political *democracy* will crown economic and social democracy.

II. The Strategy of the Movement

The triumph of these values and their effective realization by a transformation of social structures should not be considered as a merely hypothetical possibility now that the movement is weakening. Student power should be organized in view of achieving these goals.

What will be its exigencies, given the persistence of the present economic, social and political system?

-The University is the privileged, if not the only center of contestation. This contestation presupposes the authentic exercise of freedom of expression and the right to political and union information. It must transcend the boundaries of the university to reach all the structures of the society.

-This university is autonomous. Its decision-making organs are decentralized paritary committees in which students exercise responsibilities through effective participation.

-The University opens out onto the external world by democratizing access to its teaching and by asserting itself as an instrument of collective progress. It disseminates works of noted individuals representative of professional, cultural and political life. The Third World is among its major concerns.

What will be the nature of the movement?

Far from being an isolated case, the student movement is part of a revolt taking place beyond our frontiers, notably in Western Europe, and for different reasons and following different patterns in certain Eastern and Third World countries.

It applies the values of contestation to which it is committed to its own

structures and refuses to identify itself with a single aspect of its own thought or action.

For the same reason, while the movement recognizes that all its aspects share a basic political essence, it refuses to alienate itself in a politics determined by an organization, a party or a pre-existing doctrine.

Firm, whatever the regime, on the aspirations which constitute its charter, it will nevertheless be alert to any accord which may emerge between its aspirations and the future political context.

B. UNIVERSITY AND SOCIETY COMMISSION:

"THE POLITICAL DEFINITION OF A FUTURE"

The political definition of a future. The present movement is the beginning and the first manifestation of a "cultural revolution" which should lead more or less gradually in the near future to a true "structural revolution." The preceding pages have attempted to show that it is the society as a whole which is in question, that is to say, which is contested. The principles of contestation emerge of themselves from this critique.

a) *-the new principles of social thought and life*—Since contestation is a basic form of the effective exercise of the Freedom of the Human Spirit, it should not be surprising that we offer an apparently liberal formulation of these principles. But we have not forgotten that they would be worth little by themselves if they were not quickly incarnated and exercised in new structures, actions, forces. We can now enumerate these FREEDOMS of information, opinion, reflection, discussion (which presupposes that of assembly), communication, contestation and creation, and the RIGHT-DUTIES of solidarity, participation in decision-making and responsibility. Let us define what we mean by each of these words.

-*Freedom of information*, which is everyone's right to know the truth with respect to the things involved in the decisions which concern him, whether in the economic, political, cultural or social order, and so on. This presupposes measures protecting journalists from all pressures; the progressive limitation of business secrecy, classified research; the encouragement of scientific publications, the popularization of economics, etc. . . .

-*Freedom of opinion*: this is a classical liberty which requires that no one be harmed because of his convictions...

-*Freedom of reflection*: freedom of opinion is empty and freedom of expression perverted if the individual's life conditions prevent him in practice from reflecting on the information at his disposal because of lack of time, fatigue due to working conditions, transport, and especially the type of teaching and education he has received. In teaching only facts and technical knowledge, education often results in the loss of the ability to think, even for those who have the "luck" to go far with their studies. The human being must really be able to exercise his reason, his judgment.

-*Freedom of discussion*: man's social nature requires that his thought be communicated to others and enriched in contact with them. It should be possible to freely create such occasions, on the condition, however, of doing so in the appropriate places and at the appropriate times. This is the meaning of the regulation of the freedom of assembly, which has been much too strict in the Universities and businesses up to now.

-*Freedom of communication*: this freedom is still less capable of being regulated by law than the preceding one. It must be conquered essentially at the level of social consensus. Each group must recognize the necessity of opening itself to the problems, the aspirations and interests of others, to their "culture." Since it is true that "there is no single culture as a cultural absolute, but a single culture as the

sum of cultures: culture is a synthesis of contributions." (Report of the University and Culture Commission, thesis 11.) Ever more communication between different mental worlds will have to be organized, as this is an essential aspect of a protracted cultural revolution. This is also the root of the democratic demand for a legitimate pluralism which goes beyond the mere juxtaposition of interests and ideologies as though they were powers in the balance. Rather it is based on the fruitfulness of their confrontation, often too on their complementarity. The recognition of such a democratic pluralism is necessarily accompanied by the guarantee of the rights of expression and representation of minorities (cf. New Statutes of the School of Law of Paris, III, 1: the principles of contestation.)

-Freedom of contestation: This is the fundamental demand of the movement, which presupposes the effective exercise of the above-mentioned freedoms. It signifies the right of the mind to "call into question" all established structures through every type of critical examination, thus reviving the best of the anarchist tradition.

But the act of calling things into question (intellectually at first) does not signify systematic physical destruction. It is clear that society needs organization and institutions, as does each of its groups. What disappears is the apriori sacred character of the existing structures, socio-economic relations, and group objectives; this contradicts what we just said about pluralism only in appearance.

-Freedom of creation: If contestation is not to be exclusively negative and for participation to be effective, they must be based on this principle. Criticism must be immediately followed by proposal, intellectual destruction by intellectual construction, confronting the power of the imagination with the duty of reason: from "the necessary Utopia to the necessary rationality." (Cf. Report no. 1, presented by the Strike Collective of the Law School of Paris.) To fail to demand this freedom in connection with contestation is in the first place to alienate man by refusing

him his co-creative dimension, but it is also to open the way to sterile disorder, to facile irresponsibility, to demagoguery. In practice, the freedom of creation will appear as the right to initiative, to propose ideas at all levels and on all subjects, but respecting the other freedoms and principles of the Movement.

We have just written: "At all levels and on all subjects." This is to legitimize the "political" character of the thought and action of every man, to affirm the "political" essence of the Movement, and to demystify every pretense to "apoliticism."

But it is time to clear up a serious misunderstanding due to the ambiguity of the word "politics". According to the common view, "politics" had taken on a pejorative connotation, evoking the necessary but deplorable function of a professional minority with dirty hands: the "politicians" who, in the darkness of the true centers of decision-making, feed their common ambition under the most various labels by means of deals and compromises. To avoid these turpitudes and to protect family peace, social peace and the peace of the Veterans' Associations, it is necessary to avoid politics at any price and not to allow discussions to be "politicized" to avoid personal conflicts. . .

In short, once one's "political duty" is fulfilled at the ballot box, he surrenders his fate to the reigning prince(s): "It's their problem now," reserving the right to renew the blank check of the providential man from time to time by a frank and massive "yes". Thus one is not supposed to get involved in politics except at the party meetings designed for that purpose: so much the worse for the volunteers. In unions, associations, businesses or colleges, at the movies or on the radio, it is not normally a matter of "that".

But, in one way or another, through the increase in the social security tax, the job crisis, the impossibility of registering at a certain school, the urban renewal plan of the neighborhood, the Breton artichoke crisis, barricades in the streets, the

under-development of hospitals, the development of nuclear weapons, the cry of the Third World, politics concerns itself with us, even if we do not wish to be concerned with it. Apoliticalism is a quite definite politics: that of the ostrich; it also serves the interests of the "politicians" one despises; finally, it is an abdication of a right inscribed in the very nature of man, the "*zoon politikon*" of Aristotle, by submitting in advance to a dictatorship. For the Movement, politics is all reflection, all action which tends to modify the conditions of life, structures, economic and social relations, from the moment it concerns some aspect of the City (*polis*).

Becoming conscious of this political dimension of the problems, especially in the University, is already an extraordinary achievement for a great many of us, an achievement the credit for which goes to the Movement. In this positive sense, all students should be politicized especially at the Law School where this is still very new and thus less subject to influence or co-optation by traditional political groups; the majority of these groups, whether "apolitical" organizations or parties, have been incapable of understanding what is happening. This speaks against them, and most clearly against the ones which claim to represent social reform (cf. the Political Report of the Collective already cited).

-Right-duty of solidarity. it is based on the postulate according to which no man is free so long as another man suffers the burden of oppression. Not only does it found union rights, but during the May Events students and workers felt strongly that this solidarity must extend to the whole world, especially to the countries of the three continents oppressed by hunger, economic exploitation, political domination or armed imperialism.

-Right-duty of participation in decision-making. This is the logical consequence of what has been said above: political action must burst out of the narrow and presently ill-adapted framework of parliament and the party and state

apparatuses. Debate must be carried on in all sectors and at different hierarchical levels: in the companies and in the university departments, in cooperatives and unions, because local decisions concerning each unit must be based on a conception of society as a whole. But no matter how well the debate is organized at the local, regional and national levels, it will only be a more conscious form of alienation if it does not have the means to pass into action, the means of political action in the broad sense, that is to say, the possibility for each to participate more or less directly and effectively in making the decisions which concern him, "To be free in the sixties is to participate in decision-making," so said the National Center of Young Managers at its congress of May '62 (as quoted by P. Mendes-France in *The Modern Republic*.) Here again we find the demand made in the university for effective co-management, that is to say, truly paritary management, and even the demand for self-management made by certain workers. Henceforth everyone should have "a word to say" about the decisions which concern him personally or generally; this would involve extending democracy from the strictly political domain to the economic and social domains. Such an unprecedented regime could be described by the already over-used phrase, "socialist democracy."

-Right-duty of responsibility. The idea of participation is much distrusted by workers Because the form of participation possible up to now would have been fictitious, illusory and handed down from above, and because, instead of granting real power it would be a fraud. But the "May Revolution" has just modified the balance of powers, and what is being done in the University is imaginable in the business world, of course on the condition that the transitions are smoothly handled and the workers educated to responsible management. And the University would have a major role to play in this.

The word "responsible" has been repeated often since the emergence of the

movement. The students' principle complaint concerning the educational system to which they have been subjected is precisely that it has failed to give them any sense of responsibility for their own affairs. It has taken a violent struggle to discover this. They want to substitute for a morality of subjugation a morality of responsibility in the school of life itself. But it is one thing to have become conscious of this, and another to be capable of assuming the responsibilities that one demands, especially after being alienated by years of passivity. Responsibility is already relevant at the level of contestation, all the easier the more radical and irresponsible it is. Once the structures of an effective participation have been set up, it is obvious that contestation, expressed through these very structures will have to be organized and in a certain manner self-disciplined to avoid impotence and anarchy which would soon revive the danger of fascism and sweep away all the conquests of the movement. For the next few years to come, there will certainly be a delicate problem of "linking up" while waiting for truly new men to issue from a teaching of critical participation, such as is planned especially by the high school action committees. If there really is today "a generalized crisis of authority" (Edgar Morin, *Le Monde*, June 5, 1968, it is not so much the very principle of authority which is contested, except by the anarchist fringe of the movement, as the basis of this authority. Henceforth we are quite willing to obey, but on condition of being able to understand, contest and participate in decisions. The present crisis of civilization is an adolescent crisis: the sort which makes an adult of a minor.

In short, there is indeed a new philosophy behind the present movement of contestation, in which one finds numerous elements of idealism and Hegelianism, anarchism, Marxism, Freudianism, existentialism, structuralism but which cannot be reduced to any system because it refuses systematizations; it is the reaction, the assault of man as existent, in all his dimensions, against the alienating conditions

in which he is placed. It is philosophy at once critical and existential, a dialectic of transcendence, including both moments of contestation and proposal, and permanently so at the level of the society as a whole and each of its units; as such it transcends the dilemma of reformism vs. the traditional model of revolution.

The critical realism which underlies its theory of knowledge is the basis on which this new logic of transcendence passes constantly from the level of thought to the level of life, from poetry to politics. Refusing to give rise to a new structured "order," the movement wants to create structures which make possible the constant renewal of the existing order. This requires and presupposes the social recognition of a new ethic.

- No longer materialistic, that is, based on the primacy, even the exclusive value of money, consumption, production, economics:

- Nor idealistic, that is, Utopian and forgetful of the psychological, sociological and economic conditions of all action, of all thought;

- But "spiritual" in a new sense, because based in the last analysis on the *Essential Freedom* of the situated human spirit, on its responsibility, in the certitude of the perfectibility of every human being, of every society.

Because it is this certitude, this new "humanism" which is the ultimate foundation of its imprescriptible right of *CONTESTATION*.

[Introduction]

The following leaflet was written by the Coordinating Committee of the Contesting Cadres (known as the "C.4"), an organization of "cadres," that is executives and engineers. 1500 of these cadres met at the Sorbonne on the night of May 20 and declared themselves ready and willing to:

"Join the strikes which have been or can be started in their firms
 Participate in the struggle and develop all the forms thereof
 Commit themselves to give one day of pay per week of strike
 Join the strike committees or the action committee in their neighborhood."

This unprecedented support for worker and student struggles had deep causes, articulated in the leaflet below.

Entitled *Manifesto* it is a protest against the specific forms of alienation experienced by managerial personnel in modern capitalist society. Their objective is to create a new society in which man would be more than "consumer" and economic life would be democratized.

The leaflet exists in at least two different forms. The text translated here is that issued by the Worker-Student Action Committee of the Sorbonne which claims to have rewritten it from a draft submitted by the executives. The resulting leaflet was presumably more radical than the original draft. 2500 copies are said to have been printed on May 24.¹³

The other version was issued by the Coordinating Committee of Contesting Cadres on May 20. This version differs only slightly but in one respect significantly: the "C.4" condemns consumer society in America and Russia side by side.¹⁴

[Document]

MANIFESTO

Among many cadres, the student movement has given rise to a new analysis both of their mission in the company and of the goals of the consumer society which they help to build, whether consciously or not.

For these cadres, the student movement represents a fundamental contestation of the nature of our society. The verbal excesses to which this contestation may have led only express the amplitude of the problem posed. The cadres believe that they have an important role to play in formulating the bases and structures of a Society which would make of man something other than a simple consumer.

Such a revolution requires:

The elaboration of an original society, going beyond those that are generally proposed: this society will have as its fundamental characteristic that of being built for and by the wage-earners who are its driving elements.

The elaboration of concrete solutions for the democratization of management and of the general economic decision making process.

The goal of fulfillment of the personality, in work as well as in leisure, must be substituted for the usual goals of profitability and expansion.

As a short-term objective one must call into question (just as one must for society as a whole) the unions and political organizations traditionally charged with defending and expressing the aspirations of the salaried world.

Conscious of the fact that the struggle begun at the University cannot be waged successfully without the movement spreading to all economic sectors, the "Committee" proposes:

To participate with the students in changing educational methods and structures.

To introduce theory and action into the professional milieu.

WORKER STUDENT ACTION COMMITTEE

[Introduction]

During May and June, "action committees" sprung up everywhere, mobilizing the energies of local groups in schools, neighborhoods, and workplaces. This article describes the activities of such a committee in a middle class neighborhood of Paris. The article first appeared in *Les Cahiers de Mai*, no. 3, August-September, 1968.

[Document]

Journal Of A Neighborhood Action Committee

We publish here a report written collectively for the Cahiers de Mai by the members of the Maine-Montparnasse Neighborhood Action Committee.

On May 17, after the first events at the Sorbonne, three tenants in the Maine-Montparnasse complex invited a few students to come and explain their problems to the inhabitants of the building in the context of the "100 Meetings."¹⁵

Our goal was a specific but rather narrow one: to contact the interested tenants and to decide together whether there was cause to form an Action Committee in our building.

This call brought out about twenty people on the terrace of our building. A discussion started but was quickly interrupted by a shower of projectiles from tenants who obviously did not want their terrace to be transformed into a forum. We were thus obliged to accept the hospitality of one of the organizers in order to continue safe from eggs, boiled potatoes and water bombs! This retreat was good for our discussion. We introduced ourselves: a photographer, an economist, a journalist, a psychologist, various executives, and we soon understood that each of us was already sensitized to the student problem and even to issues going well beyond it. During this first meeting we decided to form an Action Committee in our building and set the date for the first meeting in a room near our place.

The Strike Picket Asks For Help

This meeting revealed that around fifty people were willing to come at least for information and that many young people from the neighborhood were ready to participate actively in whatever the present gathering might decide to do.

From its inception, the Committee was oriented toward helping the strikers. Its activities took many forms and were especially concerned with the strikers at companies in the Maine-Montparnasse complex: the Postal Sorting Center, the Pullman Company, the construction site of the third sector and the Montparnasse railway station itself. It goes without saying that before May there had never been

any contact between the workers and the tenants of Maine-Montparnasse.

The strike picket at the Mail Sorting Center had to guard very large premises with numerous entrances; although their numbers were sufficient they had a security problem. A telephone tree was devised: the strikers called four telephone numbers belonging to tenants in the building and these latter called four others, etc. Thus in an emergency we could contact the maximum people in a minimum of time (seven minutes). We had an opportunity to test the effectiveness of this system when the "fascists" came to "say hello" to the strikers. But as soon as they saw us they fled, understanding clearly what was going to happen to them! Also, every night four or five members of the Committee waited for dawn with the strikers. It was more a question of maintaining their morale than of offering material aid.

Relations with the strikers of the construction site were different. The strike picket we contacted answered that they had no special problems but that they would be happy to have coffee at night! So, every night we brought them bottles of coffee. Of course we rotated the task because they needed the coffee around midnight when the night really begins.

The Partial Return to Work Does Not Stop Our Struggle

Then on Tuesday, June 5, new problems arose: new supplies of gas having arrived the preceding weekend (Pentecost), the government announced the general return to work. The building construction union had not reached an agreement with management; the companies of the Maine-Montparnasse construction site announced the re-opening for Tuesday morning. The strike picket asked for our help: their strikers were not numerous enough to take on those who would want to return to work. They wanted many of us to come, not to stop workers from entering the construction site, but to talk with them to try to show them that the strike will have been wasted if they go back to work before an agreement has been reached. For our part, we asked for reinforcements from the other committees in the 14th District, from the extreme left organizations in the area, and from occasional students we had met. From 70 to 100 people were at the

construction site at six in the morning: there were almost as many workers (mostly foreigners) as agents of management and foremen. The Strike Committee gave no instructions, everyone argued amongst themselves and the confusion was total. We did not know whether to block the entrance to the construction site or not. It seemed awkward for us, an Action Committee, to make such a move.

After two hours, management got the workers into the construction site (which was closed to us) and organized a vote (that was more than slightly fixed) in favor of the return to work. The vote was by so-called "secret ballot" and not by raised hands; in fact an employee of management went around with a notebook and asked each worker individually whether he was for the return to work! He noted down something for each answer. The return to work won! 100 voters for a thousand workers! Sixty percent in favor of the return to work, essentially executives and branch heads! And dozens of foreign workers who do not understand our language, who do not know what they are asked and who, in any case, know that they may be deported for their answer. However, when it was explained to them that they had answered "yes" to the return to work, they went and asked the organizers of the "vote" to annul their answer. "Too late," they were told, "you have voted."

We could not intervene in any way; that would have given the bosses an opportunity to call the police and to expel those who did not belong on the construction site. The police came anyway, called by an inhabitant of the Avenue de Maine who was afraid of fights! Helmets, billy clubs, tear gas were supposed to make "everyone" reasonable again. In fact, young people were asked more or less rudely to move on.

Of the twenty or so companies which participated in the construction work, only two had union representation. In the others the workers, most of them foreigners, went on strike to follow "the movement" while hoping to benefit from it. They went on strike for two weeks without even presenting a list of demands and without having established intercompany contacts. Very quickly, in a neighboring café, around fifteen workers wrote up a leaflet with us affirming the solidarity of all the

companies on the construction site, presenting demands, and asking the workers to discuss them freely before returning to work. Lacking means to print the leaflet, our comrades from the construction site asked us to do it for them and to come back the following day to help with distribution.

On the practical level our action met with failure, since in the end management got what it wanted. But we contributed to a beginning of awareness and organization among the workers of Maine-Montparnasse. It is a good question why no more established organization than our committee had thought of doing this.

Union Delegates And Pullman Workers

The relations between the Pullman employees and our committee were fraternal, but they did not ask us for practical aid. And so we discussed the Events daily and went on little "sorties": for instance, one day we went and removed the posters which an ad agency put up for the incumbent deputy from "la Maléne" and, in order to re-establish a certain balance in the decoration of the neighborhood, we put up posters from the Peoples' Studio about our committee or the companies of Maine-Montparnasse.

We had a few problems with the Montparnasse railroad station itself. From the inception of our committee, we went to see the railway workers' strike picket to offer it our services. We were very well received and our position understood, but since no union leaders were present the railway comrades advised us to go to see them at neighborhood inter-union headquarters. There we were extremely ill received! Apparently the "leaders" took us for organized "ultra-leftists" and we were therefore welcomed as is fitting in such cases! Unfortunately, one of the members of the committee who went to the inter-union headquarters was a communist known as such by the union leaders, and so relations deteriorated. The railwaymen let us know through one of their leaders that they did not wish to establish contacts with us. We nevertheless understood that the aforesaid leader spoke only in his own name.

A Difficult Transition: From Strikes to Elections

During the period when strike support constituted our main activity, we rarely asked basic questions. But this changed as soon as the elections became certain. Our Action Committee is composed of members who have in common their district, their good will and their leftist ideas. We are more or less aware that some of us belong to the Communist Party, to the P.S.U., to organizations such as U.J.C.M.L., or the J.C.R., the anarcho-syndicalists, while others are members of the CGT, or simply non-affiliated and unpoliticized, but no one ever tries to impose the point of view of his organization on the Committee. On the contrary, everyone is free and engages in spontaneous discussion during the writing up of a leaflet, the creation of a poster, or the organization of a meeting. In the weekly discussions we organize, compromises are rare and a common line of action stands out clearly.

The preparation for the elections created some dissension. It turned out that the majority was for abstention, but only the majority! We discussed this at length but, as ever, action united us. Perhaps the best proof was the meetings we held in the neighborhood as often as possible. There, whether each of us was for or against the elections, we all knew how to explain what they represented in the framework of the present Constitution with its system of voting. In this regard, it is worth stressing the success of these meetings. It was so great that when we cannot organize a meeting in the usual places, the residents of the neighborhood show up alone to talk. Later they ask us in the street why we did not come, what is happening now, etc.

New Ways of Communicating: Meetings the Street

We decided to have a bulletin board to broaden our means of communication. We posted articles from the daily press, from Action, leaflets, documents and photographs of the events at the Edgar Quinet market as well as at the exit of the Montparnasse subway station in front of the movie theater.

As experience showed again and again, discussions started thanks to people who insulted us, and then others came to our rescue and things really got going! It was impossible to hold just one discussion and numerous groups formed on

different subjects: history, current events, politics, intellectual and union affairs, social problems, etc. It is hard to classify the hundred or so people who participate each time in our discussions. There is a bit of everything. In the first place we are there, overwhelmed by the crowd but also helped by passersby. Each group, from three to six people, is led by those who are most directly concerned by one of these problems. Examination of contemporary events interests those who are younger and more middle class. They tend to agree with the student demands (which are their children's), and are easily led on to social problems. History is generally of interest to Gaullists or members of the extreme right who try to justify themselves; we have been astonished to hear the name of Pétain, who still attracts sympathy: "It was thanks to Pétain that the Resistance could exist."¹⁶

The various unions are, of course, analyzed by the workers who all agree on the ambiguous role of the CGT, but not on how to lead or end the strike.

And then there are the old people. There are two kinds: those who say they are satisfied with their lot and who answer, when asked if they could manage in case of serious illness, "Oh well, if you ask questions like that," or "We are old, we hardly need anything"; and those who astonish us with their political ideas and their revolutionary force (especially the women). After a long discussion on socialism in France, an old woman concluded with a smile: "The only thing I'm still skeptical about is the possibility of changing man!"

Every day of course new themes are discussed, but the following question is always posed: "What do you propose to replace the present government?" After having explained that our final goal is still the abolition of private ownership of the means of production, we underline our original position with respect to changes in government. By contrast with the traditional political parties, we propose no personality, no tendency. Unlike these parties we as an Action Committee do not want to discuss possible solutions with anyone who has vested political interests (precisely these parties). With this answer we hope to communicate that this problem concerns each of us.

The Relations with Organized Moments

Politically, our Action Committee has no defined ideology. When we agree with the instructions of the Coordination Committee of the Sorbonne, or the Rue Serpente, we carry them out; thus, we participated in all the demonstrations organized by UNEF and the S.N.E.Sup. (to the great surprise of the tenants of Maine-Montparnasse who were astonished to see a group of demonstrators, led by a red flag, lining up in their building). We are truly autonomous with respect to all organizations of students, young people or others. The only disputes we have are little fights over posters with the C.P. and over "zones of influence" in the neighborhood.

There is in fact a center for 14th District Action Committees where material is organized and distributed. The other Action Committees of the district are not formed on the same recruiting base as ours; there is a March 22 Action Committee, and an Action Committee of the U.J.C.M.L. (Union des Jeunesses Communiste, Marxiste-Léniniste, a Maoist sect). For instance, a common demonstration was decided upon, limited just to our district. We were to go around to the local companies and show our solidarity. The Maine-Montparnasse Committee arrived in large numbers, but we could tell right away that this demonstration was more representative of the U.J.C.M.L. than of the Fourteenth District Action Committees in terms of the slogans, press, leaflets, and participants (who, even if they did not all live in the neighborhood, belonged to the U.J.C.M.L.) One part of our Action Committee left the demonstration for that reason while the other half remained for the sake of unity, but this explains why our participation was not all that positive. We were rather ill-received by the companies in our neighborhood! Indeed, long nocturnal discussions with strikers had finally convinced them that we belonged to no political group (especially those against which the CGT union delegates were struggling) and our participation in that demonstration showed the contrary; the comrades of our Action Committee had a hard time reestablishing good relations with the strikers. We want to stress that these little problems of relations with organized movements are not ideological

but purely tactical. It is, incidentally, amusing to see the members of our Action Committee serve as intermediaries between ourselves and the political organizations to which they belong. It really facilitates relations!

But after that demonstration on June 3, we have been taking care that the leaflets we receive from the 14th District Center, signed by the Action Committee of the 14th, are not excessively oriented towards denunciation or abstentionism. We just want any leaflet like that to be distributed with a signature and thus to be the responsibility of the Action Committee that wrote it.

The Maine-Montparnasse complex is a good illustration of "segregated" urbanism: total segregation inscribed in the very conception of the building, in the walls and the elevators; separation between the offices, between the workplaces and the inhabitants; separation between the "new" and the old quarter; separation between the apartments within the building itself. They are all comfortable (and expensive!) but there are no places for social life, no playground for children.

May 1968 has been stronger than the walls. All these separations have broken down; tenants and workers in the complex and inhabitants of other streets in the neighborhood have finally started to struggle together, to get to know each other, to become friends. The Committee has become one of the public realities of the neighborhood, through its posters, its small meetings, the distribution of Action and the Cahiers de Mai, its leaflets and demonstrations.

Two examples show this:

—on the evening of the Gaullist demonstration on the Champs-Élysées, a Gaullist tenant tried to show off his power in the building by hanging a tricolore flag with a Lorraine Cross in his window. No doubt he was unaware of the size of our Action Committee, for his weapon turned against him when the immense facade of Maine-Montparnasse was covered with red flags (slacks, sweaters, table cloths, the red part of the tricolore, etc). Without the Action Committee, no tenant would have dared to believe in such an exhibition of red; it was our first victory.

—despite the difficulty of raising hard cash, our campaign brought in

a little more than 200,000 old francs. Indeed, people have confidence in us for they know us and they give more easily to us than to strangers. We brought this sum to the strikers at the mail sorting office for them to distribute among the different companies on strike, but they informed us immediately that their strikers were not in urgent need and they proposed to give it to Renault. And so it was done.

The next chapter remains to be written...

The next chapter is not yet written, we are living it (internal economic questions, political discussions, education, library, invitations to specialists, meetings, etc...) with all the others in the factories, in the universities, in the neighborhoods; we are carrying on the movement.

[Introduction]

“A New Form of Organization in the Factories: Rank and File Committees” was published in *Les Cahiers de Mai*, no. 2, July 1-15. This journal was written by and for students and workers participating in the Events. This text is significant for giving an idea of the ferment in the factories during the May Events. The Events are often depicted as a student revolt and it is true that students initiated the struggle. But the student revolt was a catalyst for a much wider struggle involving millions of workers in strikes and factory occupations. The May Events were characterized not just by the attitudes and actions we associate with the New Left, but by a general strike affecting the entire society and calling into question capitalist relations of production. The rank and file committees described in this article belong to that aspect of the movement.

[Document]

A New Form of Organization in the Factories: RANK AND FILE COMMITTEES

(The example of C.S.F.-Issy-les-Moulineaux)

On the morning of June 11, on the market place of Issy-les-Moulineaux, the management of the C.S.F. (2400 workers) organized a vote by secret ballot on the return to work. The Strike Committee refused to participate in this vote and, not content to have the complete support of the strikers present, even won over numerous non-strikers.

Since then work has started up again, but inside the factory, a new form of organization is proving its worth: Rank and File Committees, formed during the strike. These Committees were at first composed exclusively of strikers; now the majority of non-strikers has joined the activities of the Committees. A C.F.D.T. leader defines the Rank and, File Committees thus: "To give all workers the possibility of taking their place as responsible individuals in the factory with the goal of achieving self-management."

For this a basic structure which is flexible and very adaptable must first of all be organized at the level of the work units: work place, lab, office, in order to allow the workers to organize themselves, to reflect and act on the problems.

Initial Objectives

Right of full access to and control over:

the conditions and organization of work: work pace, definition
and distribution of work positions, methods of work, environment;

promotion of the workers and wage raises;

self-discipline;

the representative of the workers in liaison with the union delegates;

organization (to be evaluated after experimentation.)

The term of office for the members of a Rank and File Committee is six months. The Rank and File Committee is composed of delegates elected by all personnel of the Basic Unit, the number of these delegates is about 10% of the total membership. Half of them is replaced every three months; no delegate is eligible two times in a row. The goal (to be attained) thanks to these methods is to rotate all the workers to responsible positions.

The role of the present management with respect to the Rank and File Committees remains to be defined. One proposition that has been discussed, but not adopted:

- the foreman (of a work unit) would be a de jure member;
- the representatives of other members of management would be elected by all the workers.
- At a higher level, i.e. the branch or department, a Branch Committee would emanate from the Rank and File Committee with a representative of each Rank and File Committees and the personnel delegates elected by each branch.
- Decisions are coordinated and controlled at the level of the branch.
- Finally, at the level of the company as a whole, the Company Committee, the powers of which would have to be re-evaluated in terms of this new rank and file organization itself.

After the C.F.D.T. representative, let us now listen to a C.G.T. militant, who defines the goals of a Rank and File Committee as follows: "For the unified workers to concretize—as complement to the unions—the defense of our interests against all the arbitrary and unjust decisions of the bosses and management."

"The elected representatives can be recalled at any moment if they do not fulfill

the responsibilities given them. They must be renewed every three months and can be continued in their functions however, it would be preferable for everyone in turn to become a workers representative."

The strikers discussed all these definitions of the role and the goals of the Rank and File Committees at the C.S.F. during the occupation of the factory. This new organization could begin to function only after the return to work.

First Struggles

The return to work took place on Wednesday morning June 19. The day before, the strikers, who had refused to vote by secret ballot chose the return to work by an open role call vote. On Wednesday morning, those occupying the factory receive the non-strikers and organize a small march inside the factory to lead the non-strikers to the work-shops and the offices: the small march takes place to the tune of the *Internationale*.

On Wednesday afternoon, lists of demands accumulate on the desks of the branch heads. Indeed, the first participants in the Rank and File Committees had decided during the strike to wait, in order to formulate precise demands:

until work had been resumed,
 until the non-strikers were organized in the Rank and File Committees,
 that the demands be formulated and deposited independently of the union delegates.

The branch heads, on receiving these lists of demands, gleefully explain that: "It's a maneuver to go over the heads of the unions," and add that most of the demands could be obtained without the intermediary of a Committee. However, they begin to worry about the excitement during Wednesday: actual work done,

zero, and consequently no production.

On Thursday morning, lists are deposited in larger numbers. The branch heads harden their position of refusal. A delegation of the unions (C.G.T. and C.F.D.T.) meets the President. While the delegation is received by the President, the workers of the Rank and File Committees decide, on a total work stoppage in the factory. Nearly all the workers of the company meet in the main workshop.

The C.G.T. delegate, back from his talk with the President, announces: "For the moment there is nothing positive, we will go back until they accept."

The C.F.D.T. delegate explains to the gathering of the personal what a Rank and File Committee is. The immediate decision of those present is "We're there and we'll stay here!" and the *Internationale* is sung to strengthen morale. Thus a spontaneous re-occupation took place, decided by the rank and file, and some took the air mattresses that were used during the first occupation from their lockers.

At the beginning of the afternoon, around 2:30, the factory management announces that the delegates of the Rank and File Committees—around sixty people—will be received by two representatives of management. At the end of this meeting, two demands are accepted in principle:

1) the Rank and File Committees are unofficially recognized, because management prefers to speak of a rank and file delegation. It brings forth as a pretext a possible confusion with the unions' Company Committee.

2) "spontaneous" delegations can go to branch heads at any time.

For the moment two important demands are not being considered:

that the Rank and File Committees deal with wages, more exactly with over-time;

that the Rank and File Committees control passage from one rank to another.

Management distributes a communique saying that the two last days were not

very productive, but that they will be paid in full so that the workers would finally return to work.

Thursday ends with a big meeting inside the factory.

Work resumes on Friday morning. At 3:00 in the afternoon, the female workers in the reel winding shop present, through the intermediary of their Rank and File Committee, a list of demands to M. Dosch, chief of production. He refuses everything wholesale. The day after the resumption of work, Dosch and certain heads started a little tightening up of discipline by giving some foremen the instruction to "turn the screws."

In the following minutes, the reel winding, machine finishing and building workshops stop work. It should be mentioned that these workshops have the most difficult tasks in the factory. Confronted with this "incredible" situation, Dosch decides to receive the union delegates and then those of the Rank and File Committees. After one and a half hour of work stoppage, Dosch accepts certain essential points from the list of demands. The delegates even force him to rescind certain arbitrary decisions previously made in his branch.

Top management had unofficially authorized the lower echelons to grant the maximum in order to interrupt this new type of movement that was paralyzing the factory. Most of the work stoppages take only a few minutes to occur and they assemble 700 or 800 workers.

"Our Struggle," an internal newsletter born during this strike, circulates among the workers. Here is an extract:

FIGHTING SPIRIT IS NOT DEAD

On Wednesday the 19th, the day of the return to work, management thought it could return to its bad old habits. A few examples: at the cable shop, attempts at discrimination between strikers and non-strikers; at the launching shop, arrogance and insults for the women who had been on strike and had been on night watch;

at Debuf's, the women monitors start noting down the work pace of the ex-strikers and insult them; at the mecanography shop, insults; at the R.S.M. there is the same atmosphere, matched by the refusal to recognize the request of the rank and file committees to discuss workshop demands. But they did not reckon with our morale and our solidarity and after some often stormy confrontations management was obliged to give in and wait for "better days".

One thing is certain, management will only be able to calm the fears we have made it feel by reimposing its discipline: M. Dosch said this clearly, and M. Boudigues, at the meeting of the executives and management, apparently congratulated them for the discipline that reigned in the factory before the strike. It must be admitted that they needed encouragement.

On Thursday and Friday our solidarity was manifested: the return to work does not mean in any way that fighting spirit is blunted.

Long Live the Rank and File Committees

During the struggle we created rank and file committees to represent us. In certain sectors, the members of these committees are real workshop delegates, spokesmen for their work comrades and controlled by them. In other sectors, their contestation even goes so far as to suggest more appropriate methods for the improvement of work. On the one side there is the role of class struggle, on the other side that of class collaboration. It would be Utopian to look for the middle term wanted by some; these committees must be oriented towards the class struggle. The bosses are quite aware of this and it is at R.S.M. that they find it hardest to accept them because there the committees reveal their full efficacy.

The rank and file committees, elected in each workshop, recallable at any moment, insure real workers' control over their spokesmen and a genuine representativity. That is why they must be imposed and maintained.

Democratic Control over Action

On Thursday, June 27, after 6 P.M., a meeting of about 200 members of the Rank and File Committees is held in a cafeteria. Two problems are posed at the beginning: the preparation of the return to work after the holidays and the relations between the strikers and the non-strikers in the Rank and File Committees.

Apart from the special demands of each committee, according to whether it represents the sheet iron mill, the bookkeeping and planning bureau, etc., each Rank and File Committee is faced with the following danger: confining itself to small corporative demands.

The question is posed in the following terms: "So once we have obtained 15 minutes to wash up, a white overall, the right to sit down, either it will be paradise, which is doubtful, or the guys will no longer be interested. We must deal with more important problems, for instance: the management of the factory.

The cable workers have achieved self-discipline, i.e. they relieve the foremen and the agents of management of this part of their power: maintaining order. The C.S.F. workers demand self discipline mainly in order not to undergo the numerous vexations and humiliations inflicted by the foremen. But it soon becomes clear that this self-discipline changes them into unconscious agents of management and that they pressure their comrades - with a smile - to obey the factory regulations laid down arbitrarily by management.

The critique of self-discipline begins with an anecdote told by a delegate from a Rank and File Committee. The foreman of one of the R.S.M. (Synchro-motor Relay) workshops, famous for the tough discipline he imposed on the workshop, chose to accept only one point from the list of demands given him by the workers: self-discipline.

This does not seem to be a chance coincidence and one of the workers of that

shop intervenes: "We are not armed to deal with self-discipline, it is just what management wants, moreover it is a way of accepting, the factory regulations imposed by the bosses without discussion." Another worker answers: "We should establish the regulations ourselves." A delegate from a Rank and File Committee explains: "You don't believe that they will let us set up the regulations, because they are perfectly aware that the first article would be the take-over by the workers of the premises, the direction and the assets of the factory. Anyway, this project of self-discipline has not withstood the test, it is more useful to the bosses than to the workers."

The meeting turns towards the discussion of new struggles, especially those designed to take away from the most of the high executives' prerogatives in the organization of work. The Rank and File Committees are ready to begin staggered strikes which disrupt production as well as the repressive apparatus of the bosses.

The goal: the organization of the whole C.S.F. factory into Rank and File Committees is already achieved, but inter-factory liaison is as yet at its beginnings. This of course concerns a liaison between rank and file militants which is very easy to set up initially but very hard to maintain.

Although none of them had gone on strike, the non-strikers who are present at this meeting speak up and join the strikers in hailing the presentation of a list of demands by the warehouse workers as a victory.

We asked a C.G.T. delegate, who was a member of a Rank and File Committee, the following question: "Is there a contradiction between the role of personnel delegate and that of a rank and file delegate?"

"No, because up to now there was not been enough representation and above all, enough time to deal with all the problems within each group. Anyway, the union leaders cannot remain outside this movement which unites almost all the workers of the C.S.F. During this long strike we conceived and initiated our

present struggle and no one can stop it from developing."

[Introduction]

“The University as a Red Base.” This and the next two articles describe the movement in the city of Nantes, where it reached its apogee. This first article concerns the development of the student movement in that city. It was published in *Les Cahiers de Mai*, June 15, 1968.

“Nantes: A Whole Town Discovers the Power of the People.” The factory occupation movement began at Sud-Aviation in Nantes. This article, by a group of students sent out from Paris, describes the situation in the town as workers gradually seized control. The article first appeared in *Action*, June 10, 1968, and was reprinted in *Les Cahiers de Mai*, June 15, 1968.

“From Roadblocks to Self-Defense.” This article is a continuation of the preceding one. It describes the formation of an incipient revolutionary “government” on the basis of the regional strike committees in Nantes. This article was originally published in *Action*, June 11, 1968, and reprinted in *Les Cahiers de Mai*, June 15, 1968.

[Document]

The University As A Red Base

The students of Nantes played the same role in their city as the Nanterre "enragés" played in the later paralysis of the country as a whole. Against the background of the farm crisis, they were the catalysts of the general movement of contestation.

As early as the first quarter, a few trouble-makers posed the problem of sexual segregation in the dormitories. Having obtained the repeal of the house rules (as at Nanterre a little later), the students felt the need to go beyond the framework of their own problems by supporting the struggle of the employees in the dorms and the cafeterias; it was largely because of the students that 75% of the personnel were unionized at the end of December.

At the beginning of the second quarter, the same activists picketed the cafeteria "to protest against working conditions and wages;" they took over the leadership of UNEF and the M.N.E.F. (January 20th) not to strengthen those institutions but to use the material means they had at their disposal.

February 14 was a key date, a national day of protest by dorm residents; the demonstration and the invasion of the Chancellor's office ended with a treacherous attack by the police. There were numerous wounded and arrests.

The next day the whole city was scandalized by the brutality of the CRS. Here, as at Nanterre, every advance of the repression brought with it a widening of the struggle. A university strike began which lasted several days; the students held discussions with their professors and distributed leaflets in the factories. Note that during this period the U.E.C. (Union of Communist Students, affiliated with the Communist Party) had the same treacherous policy as at Nanterre, avoiding these early acts of contestation and even denouncing "anarchist provocateurs" the day after the police beatings!

After that until Easter there was only a small demonstration on March 15.

But the Paris events had repercussions in Nantes from the beginning of May. On May 7 students and professors began a strike in connection with the national

movement. On May 8 they participated out of solidarity in the worker and farmer demonstrations. It should be said that contact with the workers' unions, which was rather cold at first, improved in and through the common struggle.

The FO, the CFDT and the CGT (not without reservations) later agreed to collaborate, culminating in student participation in the Central Strike Committee from May 30 on. Before this, when Sud-Aviation started a wildcat strike on May 14, the students rushed in with moral and material support (money, blankets taken from the dorms). They were everywhere, reinforcing the picket lines; they defended the road blocks alongside the truckers (see the article "Toward Self-Defense").

Thanks to the dynamism of their struggle the students rallied new troops: the conservative colleges (law, pharmacy, medicine), disgusted by the violence of the cops, rushed headlong into the fight. In the Law School, they refused to take the exams and proclaimed their autonomy. The high school students also followed after May 11, when they invaded the Nantes railway station together with the college students. They formed High School Action Committees and from then on participated in all the activities.

The legitimacy and efficacy of the more radical forms of action was mainly imposed by the students--and all the other young people with them. Sanctions were imposed by the chancellor's office after the incidents of February 14; the 10,000 franc scholarship was canceled. Petitions and protests were unsuccessful. But when, after the unitary demonstration of May 13, students and workers fought at the Prefecture they obtained satisfaction on those two points by showing their force and resolution. Even the most militant did not preach violence for its own sake; yet like the farmers, they observed that given the authoritarian nature of the present regime the only way to be heard is through violence in the streets.

On the other hand, the Faculty of Letters has had the interesting idea of organizing discussions on parochial schools for the last ten days. Fifty per cent of the pre-baccalaureate students are in Catholic education.¹⁷ Thanks to the general climate of cultural revolution this was the first time that the problem has been squarely faced by teachers from the public and private sector. Thus a decisive step was taken

towards the unification of education right in the middle of Chouan country.¹⁸

Sectarian divisions between leftist students have become secondary thanks to the struggle. Farmers and workers visited the university out of curiosity, but this can be the start of a true opening of the universities to the people. Right now the students are struggling on two fronts:

-Within, they are trying to prevent reformist co-optation. Certain students do not understand the depth of the present crisis: the absurdity of exams, the anti-democratic character of admissions policy, the isolation of studies from the problems of real life. Instead of looking for solutions together with the workers and farmers, they just seek piecemeal reform, or they accept Gaullist objectives inscribed in the Fifth Plan.

-On the outside, they participate actively in the strike and are already thinking about the organization of a People's University for the future. Banners in all their demonstrations demand the admission of all young workers to the inexpensive student cafeteria. The farmers unions have been contacted to coordinate with the campuses the professional education required for the development of proletarianized agricultural workers.

Six months ago everybody said: "You students criticize everything, you want to destroy everything, but you don't know what to put in its place. There will be chaos!"

Today, in the course of the struggle, day care centers have been improvised on all the campuses and, more generally, new forms of organization have emerged.

This confidence in the creativity of the movement is the greatest contribution of student agitation.

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**Nantes: A Whole Town Discovers The Power Of The People
(Workers, Farmers, Students)**

(This is the collective account of a trip to Nantes made by three comrades from Nanterre University: Bernard Conein, Bernard Granotier and Henri Fournie.)

Working Class Combativity In The Occupied Factories

We chose two companies as tests of working class combativity: Sud-Aviation Bouguenais and A.C.B. (ship building). Numerous discussions with worker unionists also enabled us to get an idea of the degree of class consciousness among the workers of Nantes; in particular, we attended meetings of the railroad workers' inter-union Strike Committee.

Contact with the Sud-Aviation Bouguenais factory seemed especially important to us since this was the first company occupied by its workers, and played the role of "detonator" in unleashing the general strike.

The factory is situated on the edge of Nantes. Today it looks like a regular fortress; successive barricades control the entry into the factory area. Every 20 meters there are picket lines (21 in all), ready to respond to any attack from the outside. Thugs from the C.D.R. (Committee for Republican Defense, a right-wing group) were expected that evening.

The CGT has the majority at Sud-Aviation with 800 votes, then comes the CFDT with 700 votes, then the CGT-FO with 300 votes. CGT pickets are suspicious of contacts with students; the worker-student link is made at point 16, the picket of the hourly FO workers, who have taken a revolutionary syndicalist line.

It all began with a demand for shorter hours without lower wages. After management refused to consider the workers' demands, the CGT and the CFDT called for a slow-down on May 1, the FO demanding an unlimited strike with factory occupation. May 7, two days before the first full day of the strike, the boss fled,

pursued by 35 workers. He succeeded in getting away. May 10, discussions with management degenerated into a farce. The unions' policy of striking every half hour was reaffirmed by a vote which also rejected the CGT and FO proposal for a total strike without factory occupation.

Tuesday, May 14, the half hour strikes continued, but around 3 pm three union delegates decided to chase the white collar employees out of their offices and to lock the boss in his office. Some white collar employees joined the sequestered boss. A guard was set up in front of his door. To keep the boss from getting bored, a loudspeaker playing ear-splitting revolutionary songs was installed next to his door, which no doubt enabled him to learn the Internationale by heart without ideological strain. But the sound was so loud it annoyed the union guard in front of the office as much as the director; the loud speaker was finally taken away, the musical concert ended.

A Strike Committee was set up, representing the elected delegates of the guard posts. The workers set these posts up spontaneously, using lumber to build watch towers for the monitors behind the walls of the factory. The first night the workers slept in refrigerator packing crates. Several days later, after Séguy's condemnation of acts of sequestration, the sequestering of the boss posed problems for the CGT unionists. The CFDT was in favor of releasing Duvochel (the boss) in exchange for posting a bond. The FO faction was for continuing the sequestration. The majority of the workers opposed Duvochel's liberation, which threatened to demobilize a good number of them. A representative of the CGT leadership, Desaigne, arrived from Paris during the night. This speed of movement astonished the workers. Desaigne asked them with pride:

"Guess how I came?"

The workers replied: "By bicycle?"

"No," replied Desaigne.

"By car?"

"No."

"By train?"

“No, by plane,” replied Desaigne proudly, to the astonishment of most of the guard post.

At the inter-union council the next day Desaigne took the floor, explaining that he came on his own initiative against the judgment of the Confederation, and requested the liberation of Duvochel. The Strike Committee took this intervention very badly; a CGT delegate even retorted that the problem of Duvochel’s sequestration could not be posed by an outsider. Furious, Desaigne finally left and took the plane directly for Paris. The next day there was a vote for or against Duvochel’s sequestration; the director’s release was decided by 66.7% of those voting.

Several days later the strikers perfected a system of internal organization within the company to maintain the occupation. A daily canteen was set up with donated labor. Permanent night shelters were installed everywhere in the factory. Entertainment was organized and there was a carnival for the benefit of the Strike Committee on Sunday.

This type of factory occupation is unprecedented in the history of Sud-Aviation although there had been lock-outs several times at the factory: in 1957, when it was occupied by the police; in 1960 another lock-out lasted two weeks after a wage strike, and in 1962 as well.

With its 2800 workers the Sud-Aviation factory is one of the biggest companies of the region.

The Beginnings Of Direct Management Of The Factories

The deepest phenomena of these last weeks have undoubtedly passed unseen. Excitement or anxiety focused everyone’s attention on the spectacular aspects to the detriment of more important changes. However, several newspapers briefly mentioned cases in which workers called into question the organization of their labor, for example: work pace, safety on the job, productivity. Workers began to envisage making changes on their own initiative at Péchiney, Donges, the C.S.F. in Brest, etc. Unfortunately, the news did not say much about these experiments.

It is essential now to reflect on the embryos of self-management developed by the workers in certain factories because they represent a higher level of consciousness as

compared with traditional wage demands. No doubt one of the characteristics of the May days was the hesitation and ambiguity surrounding the choice of a central terrain of struggle: the CGT always tried to keep the struggle at the level of strictly quantitative improvements; the CFDT put forward the ideas of participation and co-management without transcending the mystifying ideal of Swedish socialism. On the other hand, the rank and file could be seen leaving the terrain chosen by the CGT, or giving a radical content to CGT slogans by putting into practice the idea of appropriation of the means of production by the workers.

Union Demands And The Problem Of Power

Recently some students have proclaimed themselves "the only revolutionaries" because they emphasized the refusal of the university hierarchy while, they would have us believe, the workers were ignoble reformists whose struggle was limited to union demands. Coming from privileged groups, this pretension deserves only a smile. But by contrast with the opposite and even more dangerous view, the experience of 1936 allows us to answer no to the question, "Can the workers irreversibly improve their life conditions within the framework of the existing regime?" The need to challenge the bourgeoisie is clearly expressed in this slogan, written on the walls of Nantes:

"MASSIVE INCREASE IN WAGES WITHOUT A CHANGE IN THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STRUCTURES =
INCREASE IN THE COST OF LIVING AND A RETURN TO POVERTY SEVERAL MONTHS FROM NOW."

What interests us is the fact that this position was put into practice even if in too limited forms. Witness this leaflet of the Sailors' Strike Committee, which preceded a long list of material demands with four points that posed the question of power:

STRIKE COMMITTEE OF THE PORT OF NANTES:
OFFICERS AND SAILORS
DEMANDS

As preconditions for all discussions:

1. Repeal of the antisocial Ordinances and the Decree of July 31, 1963, limiting the right to strike;
2. Full payment for strike days;
3. No disconnection between salaries and official guarantees for the future.
 - Recognition of union freedoms within the company.
 - Increased power and legal immunity for the Delegate.
 - Creation of a Company Committee within the Autonomous Port.
 - Paritary management of the Company by the Delegates to the Company Committee, while awaiting the democratic nationalization of the Merchant Marine.
 - Granting real powers to the Company Committees and a large increase in their budgets, 5% minimum.
 - Return to the 40 hour work week without lower wages.
 - Equal vacation and food bonuses for officers and sailors.
 - Granting the 13th month on a fixed date.
 - Etc...

And there were not just leaflets...

Challenging The Managerial Hierarchy

The imprisonment of directors was the first symptom. Duvochel, the boss at Sud-Aviation, was locked up for several days until he got his freedom from that other boss, Séguy, despite the will of the workers.

The CGT delegate Andrieu told how sailors in the Merchant Marine rebelled for the first time against their commander. He was denounced and insulted because of his bad habit of spying on the private life of his men. Everything began with this act of disrespect. On another boat, a fake vote had been organized with the help of illiterate blacks to force a return to work. Immediately, thirty activists intervened and the subordinates put their chief in his place. A last example: this leaflet published by the Loire-Atlantique Social Security workers at the end of May demanding the repeal of the Ordinances:

"In order to reach this goal as soon as possible, the departmental CGT and CFDT

have agreed with their Confederations to immediately set up Provisional Management Committees composed entirely of wage earners in the department's various Social Security and Family Subsidy Funds.

These Committees are substituting themselves on their own initiative for the Councils set up by the Government in the framework of the Ordinances.

They are working rapidly to take the measures necessary to assure the election of Administrators from among the wage earning population, which is the only group qualified to manage funds belonging to the workers."

Management changed still more profoundly at the E.D.F. (Electricity of France) thermic center in Cheviré. Sunday, June 2, the day when I talked with the workers and technicians of this factory, they had just received an average raise of 15,000 old francs a month and...they continued the strike! This was because, as one of them said: "The executives have not been here for two weeks and the plant still runs. We don't need them to provide current." This intervention led to a whole discussion of the executive problem. They explained to me that in the Loire-Atlantique impressive numbers of executives were in solidarity with the workers, something never before seen. But support for wage demands was not the main point; the theme of management cemented the union. The executives were frustrated by the excessive centralization of public enterprises; they remain in their offices, signing papers, but they have no decision-making power.

Whether or not executives participated, what kind of self-management resulted?

The Functioning Of Direct Management

We found the first stage in the organization of the factory occupations. Here, for example, is the communiqué of the Central Strike Committee concerning the A.C.B. ship yards:

"On the third day of the occupation, the Central Committee was satisfied to observe the will to struggle of the whole A.C.B. personnel. No problems in the organization of rounds and rotations have been brought to the attention of the

Committee. All shops, all offices are now well organized; this is worthy of note. When workers run things, they know how to get organized. Pay was distributed normally Wednesday at 4:00 pm. Some comrades have not yet picked up their envelope; to do so they should contact the Central Committee (tel. 322).

Canned goods were distributed after wages, and we take note of the personnel's self discipline because all the orders were for less than 30 Francs, as requested."

The last two paragraphs give interesting hints about food supplies and the way in which accounts were settled among the workers themselves. Similarly, the strikers in the merchant marine requisitioned all the goods stored on the boats. This had never happened in earlier strikes, and this time too the ship owners tried to prevent the store rooms from being opened, but they had to yield in the face of threats to pry off the doors and locks.

Self-management was a necessity for the workers in the case of the Cheviré factory. When, on Saturday, May 18, the 293 agents occupied the place, they chose a strike committee composed of delegates from each union (90% of the workers at the E.D.F. are unionized). While cutting back the current (which contributed to paralyzing local industries), they had to maintain a minimum of electricity to assure vital services: hospitals, etc. The Strike Committee therefore asked the strikers to "accept their responsibilities" in this domain. At the time of my investigation, the elected Committee had been the only source of authority in the plant for two weeks. The Committee saw to it that workers were there around the clock. It organized the continued supply of natural gas. It put order into the active but somewhat confused solidarity with which the surrounding population distributed food to the strikers.

The activists with whom I talked were very conscious (even the CGT delegate!) of the political meaning of this experiment, and one of them explained: "We wanted to show our ability and thus our right as producers to manage the means of production which we use. We've shown it can be done!"

If May 1968 was truly a "peaceful 1905" as Andrieu says, the 1917 to come will have to draw the logical consequences of these managerial conquests: power to the worker.¹⁹

Document

From Roadblocks To Self-Defense

Nantes: May 24-May 31.

In the second half of the month of May official politicians and “leftists” debated whether the French situation was revolutionary or not. The debate is obviously much clearer in Nantes, where the state of the struggle is such that no one can avoid taking a stand. Here is a concrete example from a leaflet signed UNEF-Transportation FO, distributed on May 30:

CRS AGAINST ROADBLOCKS

On May 29, around 5 pm, the Transportation FO and students organized a roadblock at the entrance of Sorinières. About 50 oil drums were set up in the middle of the road by about 100 FO teamsters, helped by students.

In agreement with the Central Strike Committee, only private cars and trucks containing perishable goods with a pass from the Central Strike Committee were allowed through.

Then around 10 pm., four busloads of Mobile Guards arrived from Nantes with six motorcycle policemen, not to mention the accompanying police cars. After calling the leader of the roadblock, the chief of the forces of law and “order” ordered the attack, without warning.

There were several wounded, among them one high school student who was severely injured.

Those who wrote the leaflet and those who read it all agreed on the following facts: there is a Central Strike Committee; this Committee is in power; it decides on the right to travel on the roads; when private parties want to speak to someone in authority, they do not go to the Mayor or the Prefect but to the Central Committee. If this is not a revolutionary situation, when is there a revolution? Or do words no

longer have any meaning?

Anyway, when the teamsters went on strike in Nantes, they did not ask subtle questions about revolution but they did see clearly that they had to control the communication of Nantes with the outside world. This was the only solution.

The roadblocks around Nantes were set up on Friday, May 24. The striking teamsters sealed off the main thoroughfares with the help of reinforcements of high school and college students. After May 26, the FO union—which dominates transportation in Nantes—acted in accord with the Central Strike Committee that had just been formed. The Central Strike Committee was already distributing gas rations; in addition, it was responsible for delivering permits to truckers to let only those goods through that were needed by the farmers or to supply the strikers with food. It was a good idea, but unfortunately confusion reigned at first due to a lack of organization. The Central Strike Committee distributed the permits badly because it had no competent “transportation” commission. No one wrote on the pass the number of the truck and the nature of freight (whether it was urgent or non-urgent merchandise). At first many truckers did not know that they needed a permit. The chief of the main “sweat shop” Grangjuoan, obtained a permit because the Central Strike Committee had not contacted the truckers! Etc...In spite of this, the roads were controlled. The four main accesses were watched by pickets of 500 truckers and students. Those who tried to run the blockade suffered a few broken windows and flat tires, but there was no looting: on Saturday, June 1, an FO communiqué denied rumors concerning the ransoming of private cars. The cops did not dare to disperse their forces to attack. The city authorities became more or less complicit with the organization that had been established.

And so, for several days, a whole town was isolated, the blockades functioning as filters. They even prepared for armed resistance in case the meager police forces that were still at the disposal of the Prefect tried to intervene. However, from May 31 on the situation changed. The awakening of the Gaullist state made the threat of police repression real. The Pentecostal holidays had a demobilizing influence and the probable return to work in a few factories forced the unions to reinforce their picket

lines, which reduced their strength on the roadblocks.

And finally, from fear of motorists' discontent, the Central Strike Committee decided on June 1 to abandon the system of gas rationing (which required a whole administration of 40 people). Under those circumstances, the roadblocks could no longer be held; they were dismantled the night of June 1. The battlefield had to be changed to avoid bloodshed.

As an FO delegate told me on June 2, "If Paris starts up again on Tuesday, escorted convoys of trucks will arrive en masse on June 4. No question of holding the roads! But if our picket lines in the factories prevent the trucks from being unloaded the struggle will continue."

Nantes will thus have lived for a week in a situation of semi-self-defense, which did not take a violent form only because public authority was dismantled.

From Self-Organization To Self-Management

Just as during the Commune of Paris, the city of Nantes organized itself without having recourse to the intermediary bodies of the State.²⁰ From the first days of the strike on, the withering away of the State was realized in reality. To confront the situation, worker and peasant unions took control of the city's destiny.

This exemplary action has shown the masses of the people one of the most important things of all, namely that they have the capacity for self-organization. One element of socialism was concretely realized in the Nantes area, going far beyond the democratic reforms supported by the political parties. The Central Strike Committee, which brought together farmer and worker unions, moved into City Hall on Sunday, May 27. The Prefect had only a bailiff at his disposal.

I. Birth of the New Power: From Neighborhood Committees to the Central Strike Committee

Everything started in the Batignolles at the end of the second week of the strike (May 24). This is a 95% working class neighborhood of Nantes. The wives of the strikers there, mobilized by their family associations (A.S.R. and A.P.F.), decided to organize food distribution. Going through the neighborhood with a loudspeaker, the strikers' wives called the population to a meeting.

This first meeting was very enthusiastic and very militant; everyone was conscious of the political nature of the intended action. After the meeting, a delegation of about 100 strikers' wives went to the nearest factory to contact the Strike Committees.

A food supply committee was created, bringing together the three workers' family associations (A.S.F., A.P.F., U.F.F.). This committee opened direct contacts with the farmers' unions of the nearest village: La Chapelle-sur-Erdre. A meeting of 15 unionized farmers and a delegation of workers and students decided to set up a permanent liaison to organize a distribution network without middlemen.

Simultaneously, on May 26, the unions discussed the establishment of a Central Strike Committee. This initiative had been demanded for a week by the U.O.FO of the Loire-Atlantique, which espoused revolutionary politics in opposition to the FO National Confederation.

This choice forced the unions to decide between blocking production completely or the use of the means of production by the producers in order to begin to create an autonomous people's power. The Central Strike Committee was composed of seven unions: the three workers unions, the two farmers' unions (E.N.S.E.A., C.N.S.A.) and the two university unions (F.E.N., UNEF). There were two delegates from each union.

It took a long time for the Departmental Assemblies of the unions to accept this concept of organic unity, but it was the beginning of an independent workers' power. The Central Strike Committee had the same idea of organizing food distribution as the Neighborhood Committees, and in fact the activities of these two organizations overlapped.

The Central Strike Committee, suspicious of the Neighborhood Committees, reproached them with having bypassed it in the beginning. In fact, the Neighborhood Committees turned out to be much more effective at organizing food distribution, and their action went much deeper than that of the unions. Starting with the creation of a direct market, they became cells of politicization in working class neighborhoods.

The Batignolles Committee put up four informational posters in the neighborhoods. One of those posters was proof of the degree of politicization of

these neighborhood committees; it contained the following slogan: "Massive increase in wages without a change in the economic and political structures = increase in the cost of living and a return to poverty several months from now."

II. Organization of Food Supplies by the Strikers

Meanwhile, the Central Strike Committee coordinated the organization of the various food supplies. The occupied Chamber of Agriculture maintained the liaison between the Neighborhood Committees and the Central Strike Committee. The Neighborhood Committees spread like wild-fire throughout the working class neighborhoods. On Wednesday, May 29, the Central Strike Committee opened six stores in the schools. On May 23, the Farmers' Unions issued an appeal for worker-farmer solidarity to organize food distribution concretely. Worker-student teams were created to help the farmers and they hoed potatoes and dug up the new potatoes.

Regular transportation was assured at first through the use of small trucks in the beginning and later with Municipal buses.

Prices were equivalent to cost, a liter of milk going from 80 to 50 centimes, a kilo of potatoes from 70 to 12 centimes, carrots from 80 to 50 centimes. The big shop owners had to close down. Every morning union members checked the prices on the markets. They called out with the loudspeaker: "Shopkeepers, stay honest." Armed with a list of minimum and maximum prices, flying teams spread over the markets. Explanations were demanded of those who exceeded the maximum. Posters were issued to grocery stores that were allowed to open, with the following message: "Out of concern for the population's food supply, the unions allow this small shop to open its doors on the condition that it respects normal prices."

The farmers gave two and a half million [old] francs, which was kept in reserve in order to assure later survival. Many gifts in kind were added to that.

The workers left the electric current on, specifically to keep the dairies in operation. The fuel and gas needed by the farmers was delivered normally. Strikers delivered industrial food for cattle to the farmers.

In each of these actions, worker-farmer mutual aid was realized concretely with a clear consciousness of its political character. The transformation of agricultural

techniques and the proletarianization of the farmers had created a new class of farmers in the younger generation who linked their destiny directly with that of the working class. The farm leader, Bernard Lambert, was the best representative of this new revolutionary consciousness among farmers.

III. The Generalization of Direct Management

On the other hand, the Central Strike Committee had also taken over the distribution of gas in agreement with the Oil Tankers' Strike Committee; rations were issued by the unions to the Health Services and the food distributors. This decision in no way called into question the strike action in the sectors concerned; it was limited to the organization of priority services under union control, which reinforced the power of the union in the city.

Unionized teachers and camp leaders organized nurseries for the strikers' children. The educational institutions' Strike Committees accepted responsibility for taking in the children and so avoided the collapse of the teachers' strike movements. At the same time, child care was organized in the universities.

Finally, the union organizations distributed food rations to the families of those strikers in the worst financial situation. These rations were the equivalent of a certain amount of food. For each child under three years of age, a ration for one franc for milk, and for each person older than three years, a ration for 500 grams of bread and a ration for one franc worth of food staples.

The small shopkeepers' unions and the pharmacists' unions collected the rations, which were payable at the cashier of the social aid bureau. The shopkeepers were asked to honor the rations out of solidarity with the strikers' families.

This direct organization by the new power implied the existence of a united political front between farmers, the working class, students and the middle classes. This united front was realized in Nantes and that is what made it possible to go on to the second level of the struggle: the creation of an autonomous workers' power in the face of the disintegration of the power of the ruling class.

Nantes was a unique, concrete example which demonstrated the possibility of a workers' government.

Part II: An Unsolved Theoretical Problem: The Middle Strata

[Introduction]

This section presents three theoretical articles, each offering a contrary explanation of the role of the middle strata in the May Events. This phenomenon is both very new and very difficult to interpret. The pessimistic analyses of "white collar" labor of C. Wright Mills and William Whyte seemed adequate and convincing until May '68. But the Events shattered the image they presented of a politically passive and socially conformist "middle class".

The new potentialities revealed by the May Events require a new theory of the middle strata, because we now know they are capable of more than anyone had previously imagined, even, no doubt, in countries like the United States, where they still remain largely passive and conformist to this day.

The May Events produced a flowering of theories, from new working class interpretations²¹ to a vigorous reassertion of the rightness of the traditional Marxist assimilation of the middle strata and the petty bourgeoisie. This latter position, which was that of the French Communist Party throughout most of its history, lies at the basis of the article by Claude Prévost translated below. Curiously enough, this was also the position of French Maoism during the May Events.

In a pamphlet written in response to A. Glucksmann's new working class argument, a Maoist group proposed that scientists, executives, and engineers all sell services individually to corporations which pay them out of revenue.²² Hence the individual cadre is never a producer of surplus value, never a proletarian, but always a recipient of profit. His petty bourgeois class being is merely veiled by the fact that he receives a salary instead of owning an enterprise."

The article by Claude Prévost was published in June 1968 in *La Nouvelle*

Critique, a theoretical journal of the French Communist Party. This article is one of the most intelligent critiques of student ideology produced by the Party in the period of the Events. Its relatively mild and reasonable tone should not make one forget the violent and, often dishonest polemics still resounding in the background.: it is an expression of their theoretical basis.

This article seemed important enough to translate and, publish because it would have been too easy to present only the students' side of the argument. The Communists, like many Old Leftists in the United States, were appalled by the "nihilism" they believed they could detect in the student movement. Forced to confront the views of their adversaries, they not only refuted some of the sillier ideas of the students, but revealed much about themselves.

For example: the extraordinary (for a "communist") distaste for revolutionary violence; the characterization of the relative passivity of the French proletariat in the years preceding May as "responsible" and "mature" (Lenin would not have been so sanguine); the insistence that global opposition to the society is mere silliness; the demand for a "rational" strategy which the Party can guide every step of the way without risk of surprises, even pleasant ones; the insistence on explaining the student movement in traditional terms, as petty bourgeois leftism, a point of view which reveals a great reluctance to confront a new phenomenon with new ideas; the condescending desire to co-opt and integrate the student movement into a presumably more "sensible" opposition; and so on.

But Prevost's article cannot be dismissed as a mere example of the conservatism on the left. It is sometimes right, especially when it criticizes "student folklore", the utopian spirit of the movement which was not always in touch with important realities. Thus Prévost is right to reject the fetishization of violence, the contempt for workers' demands, the total hostility to all organization, etc. Yet these were not essential aspects of the movement. The students themselves

became increasingly uncomfortable with precisely these things as the Events progressed. A critique of "student folklore" spontaneously arose within the movement as students sought realistic, if revolutionary solutions to their problems.

Hence Prévost's article, it must be admitted, does not go to the heart of the question, even if it brings certain aspects of it clearly to the fore by its very unilaterality. But the movement would not have been deeply touched by this attack, since it developed, its own self-critique and a political strategy which Prévost seems not to have understood at all.

On the other side, Roger Garaudy, in an article which appears below, attacks the traditional view in *La Démocratie Nouvelle*, a theoretical journal of the Communist Party.²³ Science, he argues, has become a direct productive force today. Hence the bearers of science are members of the "collective worker" of advanced capitalist society. The working class, thus extended, embraces a large part of the middle strata, from students to researchers, engineers and technicians, from office employees to executives "because the mechanization of administrative tasks and managerial functions increasingly erases the boundary between the employee as a manipulator of computers, for example, and the laborer working under conditions of automation".

Within the leadership of the Communist Party, Garaudy was one of the most sympathetic spectators of the May movement. He belonged to the minority in the Political Bureau (the highest policy-making body of the Party) which supported an opening toward the students, if not an adoption of their revolutionary strategy. Garaudy's article must thus be understood in part as an attack on the majority, particularly on Georges Marchais, soon to be the new Secretary General, which condemned the student movement as a "typical petty bourgeois leftist adventure".

Marchais and his allies won, and Garaudy was later expelled from the Party for his criticism of the invasion of Czechoslovakia and its aftermath. But French communism was not, after all, unaffected by the events which had influenced Garaudy to place the middle strata alongside the proletariat in the "collective worker". Already on May 26, the Party published a leaflet designed to win the middle strata away from their Leftist leaders. It states:

"The ENGINEERS, CADRES AND TECHNICIANS, threatened by dis-qualification and unemployment and suffering from the ambiguity of their relations with management and the government, and the SCIENTISTS, who play such an important role today for the future of France, are tied to the most modern productive forces. They are thus in solidarity with the working class in its demand for an economy the rationality of which will no longer be subordinated to the profit of a few, but to the needs of all."²⁴

Later, in a major theoretical work published in 1971, the Communist Party revised its analysis of the middle strata, arguing that even if many of them are not productive, they do not belong to the petty bourgeoisie and have much stronger reasons than the latter to ally themselves with the working class.

"Only a part of them can be placed in the working class; in their totality, they cannot be purely and simply assimilated to the unsalaried middle strata. It is certainly a matter of a diversified social strata, but the workers who make them up are united by a common trait of decisive importance. Even if their activity is not directly productive, these are all salaried workers, exploited individually and collectively . . .

"Before these transformations emerged, the support for working class struggles by the middle strata and especially by intellectuals appeared as a rallying to the proletarian cause. Today there is no more question of rallying individually to the cause, but of an entente to be established between social strata having common

interests and which can build a democratic future together."²⁵

Garaudy's theoretical victory, if not complete, was substantial at the very time when he was being expelled from the Party. And while the intellectual Garaudy was being ousted, the Party embarked on the most aggressive (and highly successful) campaign of recruitment and unionization among intellectuals, executives and others in its history.

While the long overdue re-orientation of the Communist Party on these matters responded to certain realities, it contained another danger already noted in 1968 by the authors of the third article translated below.²⁶ They point out that the policy of alliance with the middle strata, whether they are regarded as petty bourgeois, as a new working class, or as something between the two, tends to "legitimize and stand behind the whole present social structure, except for the capitalists' title to their factories". Indeed, the condition for alliance would seem to be a willingness to uphold and defend the privileges of the middle strata, just as working class parties have often promised to protect small property to win the support of its owners.

But tactical support for the petty bourgeoisie before and after the revolution has at worst bad effects on the morale of the proletariat. The petty bourgeoisie wields no great power under socialism and is doomed to extinction in any case. The middle strata, on the other hand, are an extremely powerful and expanding group. When the working class defends their privileges and status within capitalism, it is preparing a post-revolutionary maneuver which would lead to the continued subordination of labor to a technocratic bureaucracy. Thus the new working class analysis risks passing over into a justification, that is no longer merely tactical as with the petty bourgeoisie, of functional class divisions of decisive importance in the development of socialist society. The authors write, "What fundamental changes would be brought about by a socialism in which the

same workers would go every morning, subjected to the same advertising, to the same factories where they would find the same tasks and be under the orders of the same foremen. They have emptied the idea of socialism.”

[Document]

THE FOUNDATIONS OF LEFTIST IDEOLOGY

Claude Prévost (From *La Nouvelle Critique* no. 15, June 1968)

The student movement is rich and varied. It has moved quickly to the center of the stage, to the surprise of many. So far the tumult and confusion have scarcely permitted us to distinguish its main lines of ideological force. It is true that it is not a homogeneous milieu and that it is differentiating with increasing speed. In particular, those students who are organically closest to the *real*/working class vanguard have proposed solutions which are gradually making progress. But not without difficulties, because they come up against the resistance and the inertia of an ideology which still occludes the true perspectives of struggle. It must be recognized that leftism still dominates the ideological themes which are most successful among the students. It is the movement as a whole which spontaneously secretes this ideology while, on the other hand, quadra - or sexagenerian ideologists concern themselves with constantly reinjecting it in massive doses. Here we find a phenomenon which should neither astonish nor exasperate, but which must first be *recognized* in order the better to be *known*. Understanding this ideology will not supply a magic acid capable of dissolving it in the wink of an eye, but it can help some of those who are its bearers at least to sense what it is, therefore to begin to take their distance from it.

The statements and especially the behavior of those who bear this dominant ideology may be contradictory. But what is essential is that it presents itself as a coherent totality: this is not the least of the reasons for its success. For the sake of

convenience we will extract certain of its themes, but this work of abstraction should not make us forget how thoroughly interconnected, closely intertwined and, on first sight, indiscernible these themes are.

The Festive Horizon

The first theme, that which is most obvious or if one will the *guiding-image*, is that of *creative violence*. We cannot be indifferent when so many young demonstrators sing the *International*, even if to do so, as a witness has written, *some read the text from a sheet of paper*.

But neither should we fool ourselves; it is appropriate to look at the meaning which they themselves give to this act: "Singing the *International*," says a student in Letters, "was in any case much more the sign of a revolt, it was more a hymn *against* than, properly speaking, a communist hymn. Everyone knew this song, the song of revolt."

At the price of a typical *regression*, revolution falls back into revolt and, in the final analysis, when they mention the wretched of the earth, they think more of Frantz Fanon than of Eugene Pottier and Pierre Degeyter.

Revolt is pure violence and violence is the motor of all action. This is unhesitatingly recognized by the very ones who multiply occasions for the ultra-violent to express themselves: "It was furthermore in the logic of Daniel Cohn-Bendit's friends to provoke disorder and invite confrontation."

One could approve this logic or not, but it had to be recognized since the leaders themselves told us they regretted the passivity of the police, a passivity which, said they "anaesthetized their action and isolated it." (Jean Daniel, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, May 8); or again: "The *enragés* of Nanterre obtained the confrontation which they had long hoped for." (René Backmann, *Ibid.*) But there is no gap in this *logic* since violence reveals the movement to itself. One can

summarize a favorite thesis of the 22nd of March Movement by parodying a famous slogan: without revolutionary violence, no revolutionary movement. Whether it is really a question of revolution is quite another matter, but the fact is that they recognize a "revolutionary" dignity in the working class only to the extent that it engages in violent actions.

To tell the truth, what violence reveals to itself is less a collectivity than a juxtaposition of individuals. Speaking of the preparation of the barricades on the night of the 10th to the 11th of May, Cohn-Bendit remarked: "It was something of a festival.." It is perhaps startling, but an analogous formula can be found in the obviously sincere testimony of a philosophy student who quotes Georges Bataille (perhaps inappropriately!) writing of the same episode: "Tragedy is the horizon of the festival."

Violence is *joy*. Several witnesses describe the explosion in terms which they could have used to describe an orgasm. Violence is fecund because in it desires are *incarnated*, desires for change, desires for something merely "different," *Desire* in short. A commentator noted this clearly. He is Edgar Morin in a series of articles published in *Le Monde*. His statement of the case is doubly revealing because it is wholly caught up in the ideology which it transcribes. Morin's discourse unconsciously doubles it, exaggerating it, caricaturing it in his very metaphors: student maelstrom/ unfurling of a great rebellion/ chain reaction/ prodigious commune/ prodigious week/ *planetary emanations/ internationalist emanations/ ecstasy of history/ osmosis takes place*/the baptism of billy clubs/ the joyous springing up of barricades.. In fact, Morin is incapable of describing the student movement because he is unable to think it.

But perhaps it is impossible to give anything more than a series of poetic equivalents? This is suggested by another witness who is also a philosopher: To explain is also to co-opt, but Friday night is unco-optable by anyone, by anything.

In the first place no one has the concepts required to think it; then too, if you have witnessed this insurrection, you want to show a sort of fidelity to the students by refusing to think what took place using already constituted categories." (*Les Lettres Françaises*, "Student Special.") This invitation is perplexing. Marx did not have to give up thinking about the Paris Commune which, one readily admits, went somewhat beyond the events of the Rue Gay-Lussac in size and complexity. Is it that just as for Kant the beautiful is without concepts, so too violence cannot be thought? One of Morin's formulas provides an answer: *it all mutually engenders itself*. Violence is *life*, its oceanic deployment which no logic can encompass. Curiously, the *cult of spontaneity*, against which Lenin polemicized with well-known vigor, shows up here in conjunction with neo-Sorelian and neo-Bergsonian themes.

A Dramatic Hiatus

Bergson defined the comic as "the mechanical laid over the living." It was perhaps by virtue of a metempsychosis of ideas that M. Cohn-Bendit qualified working class demands as laughable .. In the face of this multiform life, society, with all its "integration", represents a "soulless" mechanism. Morin evokes "the disaster of techno-bureaucratic life at work." Work is necessarily "alienating". What the students refuse is "modern" society, never defined by the nature of the dominant relations of production, but by marginal, secondary adjectives.

Obviously the overworked theme of "consumer society" had to come up here as well as the other associated themes of "industrial society", of "alienation" *e tutti quanti*. As Louis Althusser says in an interview in *L'Unita* (*La Pensée*, no. 138): these are "bourgeois ideological notions .., anti-scientific, anti-Marxist, designed for the struggle against revolutionaries". It is not surprising to hear the same cord struck by His Eminence Mgr. Marty, during his Ascension homely, consumer

society meaning materialistic society, in the East as in the West. After all, in his presentation of Marcuse's philosophy, Serge Mallet traces the misdeeds of industrial society in the U.S.S.R. back to the era of the first five year plans which "disgusted" Marcuse with Marxist socialism: "Already the cement flows of Dnieprostroi suffocated the libertarian aspirations of the young Soviet republic". Happy Czarist Russia, where candles gave light..

A strange consensus forms around this theme. Some denounce "the factitious harmony of a consumer society where a presumed abundance of goods contradicts and ignores the exigencies of life, this suffocation of being in the prison of having". Others believe they can discover that "solidarity with Vietnam goes along with the refusal of consumer society, of which American capitalism offers the most perfected model and which the Vietnamese have forced to the negotiating table". "Consumer" or "industrial" society: sometimes the qualification disappears altogether and this society is no longer even precisely named. It is characterized as a "carnivorous flower", one declares oneself "against the police, against order, against *society*" and agrees that the movement has something "anti-social" about it. Sometimes too, there are so many adjectives that the mass drowns the meaning and the object of global distaste becomes every society, *Society*, "technical-bourgeois-managerial-industrial-consuming, leisure civilization", in short everything, except capitalist society. But the coherence of all this is obvious, as is what nourishes anarchic protest.

Marx said that capitalism engenders its own grave-diggers. He could not - for good reason - have read Marcuse or the small fry, because then he would have known that the grave-diggers could join the C.G.T., have children, buy refrigerators, thereby allowing themselves to be "integrated", or as Sartre nicely puts it, to become an "institution". The revolt "globally contests" the whole of "consumer society", including the consuming proletariat (the fact that there cannot

be consumption without production has been a bit neglected, but it is odd, that in all this verbal deluge the producers are sought in vain).

The working class possesses some innate virtues, a little like the blue blood of the aristocracy, but these congenital qualities are debased as quickly as, for Peguy, the mystical passes into the political. The workers' hair rapidly turns grey and they organize: "The worker who is head of a family", says Cohn-Bendit, "does not want to fight when he sees that the C.G.T. applies the brakes, when the others do not move. But the young workers, they have nothing to lose: they are unemployed, they have no family, no installments to pay on the refrigerator". These few lines are interesting: some traces of Marxist vocabulary appear in them (the workers had nothing to lose but their chains, they have their motor-bike and their electric razor to lose in 1968); but what is especially clear here is the blinding ignorance of the real working class. A tragic ignorance.

The opposition - students-institutions - is reflected in other antithetical couples: Youth-Age, Freedom-Authority. But among the institutions, there are the parties and the union organizations: it is they which are the opium of the people; the "leaderships", the political "apparatuses" are the warders who prevent "the full flowering of life", who *emprison* the "living forces of *contestation*" "in the parliaments, the sections, the cells" (Jean Daniel). Others employ metaphors which place "the disciplinary regime of the factory", on the same level as "the school-barracks" and the "Stalinistic apparatus", the C.G.T. which commands the working class and even "locks it up".

Rising aspirations focus from all sides on the working class, but this elan is addressed to a *mythical, prehistorical working class*, to workers such as one finds in Hugo's novels, isolated, ferociously rebellious workers, to a sort of "noble savage" who refuses organization, and not to the "conformist" who continues to insure vital services instead of "globally contesting" everything. There is a dramatic

hiatus here between desire and reality. There are still many students searching for a working class which can reflect back to them the image of their student condition, and not finding it, they accuse the "apparatuses" of denaturing their dream. Having believed for years what they were told by bourgeois ideologists, namely that the workers were asleep, this student fraction does not recognize these guys, obviously risen long before them and with faces that bear no trace of the nocturnal vapors; and then they resort to magic to explain this "transformation".

Neither Strategy Nor Program

But this working class is the *masses*. Precisely how can this "mass rising" be explained? Once again, this was a difficult phenomenon to think through with the categories which the majority of students had at their disposal up to then: "inertia", "apathy", "sinking into comfort". It is necessary to produce "new" concepts, or rather complements to the preceding ones. But here again one finds an old ideology, with its source in the prehistory of the working class movement, that of *active* minorities, a mechanistic caricature of the dialectical relations of the mass of troops to the vanguard: to relate these notions to each other it is necessary to have some clear ideas about strategy. But here we must admit there is a yawning gap among the majority of students.

Cohn-Bendit confesses on the 15th of May that he is borne along by events which he does not control. His statement deserves to be quoted at some length: "What happened Friday, what was happening all during the week, was not foreseen by us, much less premeditated, because we had not imagined that the government would involve itself in such stupid *provocations*". "We ourselves were *surprised by the incredible stupidity of the authorities*. We had not foreseen any *test of strength* in the Spring .. The crisis took place earlier *because the*

government itself started it. And once the escalation had begun, we were obliged to *follow*". "We thought that this objective situation would exist at the beginning of next semester. The *stupidity of the government* created it in the month of May: *we had nothing to do with it*." The passages in italics add up to an extraordinary sum of confessions: continual underestimation of the Gaullist government, small knowledge of the very milieu in which one acts, tardiness with respect to events, etc. Certainly no revolutionary ever pretended to foresee the unfolding of the "operations" he leads in all its anecdotal details; but what is striking here is the fact that the pseudo-vanguard is towed along by events and that they take on the tonality and the orientation given them by the repressive government. It is sufficient to reread in Lenin's works the writings on the period of 1917 to measure all that separates a Marxist-Leninist from a petty bourgeois anarchist.

CONTESTATION

Without strategy, the movement left to itself has no precise program. There are some who take this as a reason to condescend to those who have the one and the other and to affirm that the French Communist Party sanctions "only vague reforms" and calls for "no action". But what then is the content of the "action" called for by the anarchists? Sartre went to the Sorbonne to explain it: "Cohn-Bendit keeps the movement on the true level of contestation where it should remain". Sartre must be granted a constant virtue: he understands the timely co-optation of stylish words and knows how to give them at least an appearance of theoretical dignity.

Contestation is at present one of the most used words in France. The attempt to dig a bit deeper into the meaning of this concept comes up against a refusal. In *Le Monde* of May 10, several writers and philosophers published an interesting

text which, after giving "consumer society" its inevitable knocks ("the so-called society of abundance, perfectly exemplified by the French world") tries to see in the student movement "the will to escape by every possible means from an alienated order, an order so highly structured and integrated that simple *contestation* always risks being placed in its service." They hope that this movement can "oppose and maintain a power of refusal capable ... of opening a future". It is clear from reading this text why the verb to contest is, almost always at this time, an intransitive verb: when by chance it is given an object, this latter remains ill defined; it is, at best, "the system as a whole".

In reality, this concept of *contestation* was brought in to fill a gaping theoretical and political void in student "consciousness". The same philosophy student says it in a striking phrase: "A revolutionary signifier, still mute, has just erupted in our space". What is a "mute signifier"? No doubt an alogical monster, a signifier without signification. It cannot be better put: this *contestation* usually risks having no content. Jean Bruhat put it excellently in *Les Lettres Françaises*: this global refusal points toward no solution, it manifests a resurgence of anarcho-syndicalism and sends us back once more to the *prehistory* of the working class movement. As for the modern working class, it does not contest, it demands, and it is enough to examine the program of the C.G.T. to observe that it always employs this latter verb *transitively*.

In the final analysis, the movement threatens to yield a university Utopia. Thus the March 22nd Movement talks about transforming the University into a bastion. Whether an internal reform of the University, without any reference to the "rest" of society seems satisfactory, or whether the idea is later to project onto the "outside" the "revolution" made "within", the approach remains impregnated with an idealism which Jean Bruhat's good sense has once more quickly brought to light.

This is because at the basis of this ideology, at the level of its most secret infrastructure, there lies the project of "changing man" and of changing him first. A document published at Nanterre over a month ago by the March 22nd Movement emphasized these old libertarian aspirations for the total expression of the self. It was a case of Stirner, but reviewed and corrected by an imaginary Chomsky, who was made to say that language was pure "creativity". This document stigmatized the repressive activity of grandmothers who traumatized the grandchildren in their care by teaching them to speak "correctly". That Chomsky never spoke of creativity without *rules* ("creativity which changes the rules" and "creativity governed by the rules") and that in fact grandmothers are unwittingly, more Chomskyan than the men of "March 22nd" is, after all, a small detail which should not stop the Revolution. But, once again, the shadow of the Total *Man* reappears here.

To Rediscover the Real Relations

All these ideological themes form a coherent totality, as we have already noted. It will be objected that they are explicitly formulated by only a small number of students or ideologues. How then can the undeniable success of this ideology be explained? In *For Marx*, Althusser underlines an important aspect of the Marxist definition of ideology: "Ideology is indeed a system of representations; but usually these representations have nothing to do with "consciousness". They are usually images, sometimes concepts, but it is above all as structures that they impose themselves on the immense majority of men without passing through their "consciousness". They are perceived-accepted-suffered cultural objects, and act functionally on men by a process which escapes them". The success of anarcho-syndicalist ideology among the students is explained in particular by the lived resonances which its principal themes evoke or encounter among them.

Presenting Marcuse's work (which is still little known in France since his most

"explicit" work, *One-Dimensional Man* has just come out), Serge Mallet writes: "There is nothing astonishing about the fact that adolescents 'to whom all hope has been refused', recognize themselves in many Marcusean themes: social repression; the profoundly totalitarian character of society; mutilation and leveling of consciousness; regimentation of energies, which are forbidden all transcendence toward a different future to the profit of a productive system both rationalized in the extreme and totally irrational in its waste, its destruction of wealth, its absence of human goals; the evident failure, finally of the working class movement and the appeal to the forces of '*intellectual* subversion' as a last barrier against rising barbarism and a last reservoir of revolutionary energy". Such a description remains at the level of the lived experience which it pretends to explain; it does not allow a knowledge of the ideology which it describes as ideology; it remains itself *ideological*. To "explain" an ideology one must leap and cross a space, scrape off the imaginary relations to find the real relations. Let us sketch this work, *very briefly*.

The Professor or the System

The active student strata have only a minimal political experience, These young bourgeois and petty bourgeois masses achieved political intelligence after the end of the Algerian war, in the heart of a Gaullist regime which actively worked toward the depolitization of the middle strata, for lack of the power to depoliticize the working class. Sometimes astonishment is expressed at finding among so many of them the very same contempt of parliament and the parties, of democracy as among avowed Gaullists: this is to forget that this was the dominant ideology! In this political void, which even the most active communist organization could not have filled, the theme of "spontaneity" proliferates quite naturally. Anarcho-syndicalism is a symptom of the youth of the movement, its almost inevitable

ransom, with the taste for violent confrontation and the contempt for organization which have always characterized it.

Deprived of all perspectives of struggle for so long, the mass of students found itself in the very state of apathy which it believed it could detect in the working class. Gaullism seemed to it to be as solid as a rock, "consumer society" established for all time, in short nothing was possible. Then perspectives appear, and from that moment on, in a sociologically typical turn-around, inertia gives way to wild impatience, the foolhardy underestimation of the enemy follows on the tenacious over-estimation of this very same adversary and it is suddenly announced, as by the "Pivertiste" of '36, that *everything* is possible. It should be noted that what really produces these new perspectives remains *totality misunderstood*: a process which must undoubtedly be related to the stubborn struggle of the working class and to the progress toward political unity of the left "apparatuses". The apoliticism of former times and the present "over-politization" have the same effect: they mask the real movement and, to employ one of these railroad metaphors so much in honor today, they hide the right train.²⁷

This myopia and these "errors" are to be explained by the isolation of the mass of students. Grippled by a highly structured university organization the wheels of which they see but not the mainspring, they are in somewhat the same situation as Joseph K., caught up in a trial the meaning of which he does not grasp. Whence their limited horizon and the fact that, when the working class accelerates its movement so blatantly that even the most myopic eyes must be blinded by it, they project on it their own situation instead of seeing it for what it is, organized, powerful, resolute. Its calm is interpreted as reformism, its impressive organization as inhuman mechanism, its maturity as senility. Then, in the intoxication of recent self-discovery they long to tell these "paralytics" the secret of the movement, which they believe themselves to possess; they give lessons in tactics and strategy and

are painfully astonished by the refusal they receive.

Students have felt themselves to be an active mass only briefly: this "new consciousness" is still marked by individualistic, even libertarian aspirations for a self-fulfillment with a strong religious tint in many cases. This fulfillment takes the modern path to the "salvation of the soul", that is to say, through "commitment": a lot of thought has been given lately to the (real) decline of Sartre-ism, without seeing that despite the nearly total shipwreck of this particular nuance of existentialism, this hulk had managed to float. The essential thing is not to commit oneself to do something, but to commit oneself, without qualification. But a large sum of individual "commitments" adds up in the end to a social phenomenon.

Ignorant of the causes of its distress, the energy of protest rushes easily toward the effects. In the time of *Germinal*, when they lacked bread, it happened that miners' wives killed bakers. Today it may happen that, even while giving themselves over to "global contestation", students will choose as their privileged target the existing faculty, rather than really working to change the system which puts professors in the position of teaching as they do, rather than demanding the funds needed by Higher Education to bring itself up to the level of the requirements of our century. All too often teachers have been unable to satisfy the needs of a mass university and to face up to the necessities imposed by the scientific and technical revolution. But when they become the main target, those in power can rub their hands with glee. To establish student-faculty parity in the running of the university is a considerable advance and, we hope, an irreversible one (even though, as Maurice Duverger lucidly noted, one must watch out for a Thermidor), but the sometimes exclusive preoccupation with "qualitative" demand risks leaving the paritary administrators with a limited power over restricted means. Left to itself, the student movement might very well let the prey escape for its shadow.

A Group Apart

In reality, the search for a deep explanation collapses unless an attempt is made, with the existing categories, of course, to find the theory of this movement and, to do so, to relate it to the new constellation of today's class struggle in France. One cannot act on ideology and transform it into an "instrument of reflected action on History" without taking one's distance from it.

M. Pompidou speaks willingly of a "transformation" occurring in France. We will concede that he is right: for many years now our country has been undergoing and still undergoes a deep transformation. We are passing from artisanal France to salaried France. In his article published in our 11th issue, under the title "Social Classes in Today's France", Serge Laurent described the "sociological" effects of this phenomenon. I refer the reader to it. I will however cite several observations which appear basic to me. In the first place, this one: *"Tendency toward the internal differentiation of the basic classes, toward the development and the rapid transformation of the position of the middle strata and, in contradictory fashion, tendency toward a growing polarization of social relations"*. Next *"the tendency toward wage earning among the active population, the working class representing more than ever the largest group (43%), followed by other salaried workers (25.6%)*. In this group, there are the intellectuals, deeply affected by capillary attraction by the student movement, which represents a small percentage but a numerically large and expanding contingent, taking into account the fact that there remain many non-salaried intellectuals. Among these latter, the students, an unstable group because perpetually in the process of *changing*, of abandoning their transitory condition, but steadily growing numerically, have now passed the half million mark, having multiplied their numbers several times over in a relatively short time."

For an in-depth analysis one can return to an old text by Maurice Thorez, "The Notion of Class and the Historical Role of the Working Class". He defines the situation of the intellectual class, and by refraction that of the students. Maurice Thorez situates them generally in the middle strata but as a group apart in the midst of these "intermediate social strata". What is more the intellectuals, like the students, do not constitute a homogeneous stratum; they cannot, as such, play a directive role in political struggles; rather, their position reflects the general condition of the class struggle.

At the same time, they have "serious moral and ideological reasons for coming over to the democratic camp". These analyses are well known; they have been "put into practice" by the entire Communist Party with undeniable success. It thus cannot be said of the communists that they are surprised by what is happening: they can republish without embarrassment old texts on the ever more important role of intellectuals in political struggles, on the growing participation of youth in these very same battles, on the necessary convergence of actions led by the different classes and social strata oppressed by State monopoly capitalism; they have only to remind people of their proposals on the democratization of the University to win a wide audience.

The student masses have thus entered the struggle and (naturally) in the forms which correspond to the level of political maturity which they have attained. A heterogeneous social stratum, the students produce very differentiated, heterogeneous, even eccentric forms of action in which there is often a large share of adventurism. Those who lead the struggles of the working class would be crazy if they failed to take this into account and simply modeled their line on the fluctuations and the improvisations of student "strategy". The experience of these last few weeks shows that on this point too, these leaders are worthy of confidence.

The Same Enemy

By their ambiguous status in class society, the intellectuals -and still more the students with their doubly ambiguous status - are the stakes in a dispute between the two basic classes and are furthermore an ideologically vulnerable stratum, subject to multiple temptations, balancing between right and left opportunism, vulnerable to idealistic and individualistic illusions. For the intellectual "Ideas" seem easily animated with an absolutely autonomous force and, correlatively, it often seems to him that it suffices to wish to do. And to wish, either alone or organized in occasional and quickly dissolved collectivities. As Lenin clearly put it in *One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward*: "What generally characterizes intellectuals as a special stratum in contemporary capitalist societies, is what, among other things, disadvantageously distinguishes this social stratum from the proletariat".

We already knew this: the ideology which speaks through the mouths to which we have patiently listened is petty bourgeois ideology, a variant, quite often, of bourgeois ideology itself. The same reproach does not apply equally to all these ideologues, some of whom seem to be the object of dubious manipulations: if future history should discover here and there among them some "Pope Gapon", I will be the last to be surprised.

But many of those who follow them are authentic, sincere revolutionaries - but petty bourgeois revolutionaries. I would hazard a hypothesis: in the beginning, a short while ago, these young men started out from democratic demands, such as parity commissions, "the autonomy" of the University, etc., all measures which a bourgeois democracy can grant or rather concede if the pressure is sufficient. But these aspirations came up against the latent, then unrestrained violence of the government of the monopolies. It was enough to make them *despair of everything*. Revolt brought on instant despair in capitalism, in every democratic

society, even in society itself, and jumped vertiginous distances in one leap: they went over to revolutionary Utopia. In fact this leap is a backward one: Utopian socialism, or worse yet the vague fraternal reverie on "a more beautiful society", all that is far behind us, at least 100 years behind the vanguard of the working class. Modern revolution takes the route of enlarged democracy: this is a thesis familiar to French communists, *to which they will stick*.

But are these "young-old revolutionaries", these "archaic innovators", irremediably disqualified as revolutionaries? Certain of them, yes, without any doubt. The day after a drunk there are impressive "returns to the fold": the history of the years '30-'35 in Germany are unhappily abundant in examples of this type. But for many, it can turn out otherwise. It would be absurd to believe that this depends *entirely* on us (because, how could a subjective will, even that of a highly "structured" collectivity completely reorient an objective current?), but it depends also *on us*.

In 1936 the working class led a movement of historical significance to victory. Today, in conditions that are 100 times as difficult, it has taken on one of equal magnitude. In those days, the majority of students belonged to the Right Leagues. At present the students are 10 times more numerous and in their majority fight the same enemy as the working class. Many students do not know it; they struggle with desperation, as if they were alone and fall with an obstinacy worthy of a better fate into all the traps laid for them by a class the cunning and the resilience of which they have not yet understood. This "guerilla" struggle incommodes the working class, obliges it to cover itself on a flank which the naive may have hoped would be free from all threat -and the working class is right, there too, to strike these blows. It is in the very interest of the student movement as a whole: there where it is not relayed, shored up by an adult, organized, revolutionary working class, hence one disposing of a great communist party, in

West Germany for example, the student movement is diluted, worn down, in spite of its internal cohesion and the vigor of its struggles, and for a year now has turned in circles, without prospects.

But the negative traits we have noted in the French student movement are not indelible, like an original sin. This compact ideology can be fissured: here and there cracks appear. This myopic protest can refine its vision. The students, in their mass, have risen against the Gaullist state, against capitalist society, against the class University. They feel, in their own way, the contradictions of a regime set on crushing the working class. These latter know it, know it often for them too, and in its habitual manner, the working class will know how to be unitary for two, an attitude which does not exclude a certain harshness toward those who place this unity in jeopardy. Without the support of the intellectuals and the students, the working class would not perhaps sing the "funeral solos" of which Marx spoke, but it could not aspire to a decisive victory. It also knows how to be patient, knowing that the X's and the Y's pass, but that the students, or rather the intellectuals that they will soon become, remain. Today, the balance of forces having changed in the world, revolutionaries should certainly fight petty bourgeois revolutionism, but it is no longer necessary, as it was a hundred years ago and more, to crush it in order to build on its ruins; its elan, its generosity can be captured to the total profit of the two de facto allied strata; I would say, using a deliberately provocative expression, that it can and should be co-opted.

[Document]

THE REVOLT AND THE REVOLUTION

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To understand the meaning of what has been happening with the students these last three weeks, it is necessary to go beyond simple anecdotes. These anecdotes about the movement and the often anarchic carryings-on which have accompanied it have mainly obscured and even distorted its real meaning.

It seems to me one should, ask the following questions:

- 1st: What are the real objectives of the student movement?
- 2nd: What are the causes of these mass struggles?
- 3rd: What is their significance in terms of a class analysis, and what is their relationship to working class struggles?
- 4th: What is the present revolutionary role of the working class?

I The Goals of the Student Movement

An outstanding feature of the student movement has been the very rapid growth and development of student demands during a period of less than three weeks. The increasing scope of the goals of their struggle is evident from the serious work of the student committees in the various universities. Let us briefly sketch the direction of the movement.

A. In the beginning, their revolt was directed only against relatively superficial aspects of their situation which hardly touched upon the roots and

principles of the system. Two of the issues at the beginning were:

- Relations between professors and students
- The structure and management of the universities

(a) Relations between professors and students were, at first, identified with the relationship between classes: the professors were the oppressors and the students, the oppressed. The professor was, for the student, the image or the symbol of their dependence.

In less than fifteen days, the situation evolved very rapidly: the solidarity of a large fraction of professors with the student demands and, at the same time, the repression by the government, created a radically new atmosphere. New ties were born.

The common struggle called into question the present regime and its basic principles: the Gaullist political regime and the socio-economic system which is just state monopoly capitalism.

(b) With respect to the problem of the structure and the management of the universities the development of ideas likewise took a positive direction.

The meetings in Caen and in Amiens posed a false problem: the choice between an outdated, decadent university, in contradiction with the requirements engendered by the development of the productive forces of the society. . . and a technocratic university, better adapted to the demands of the state monopoly capitalism. This false alternative was quickly swept aside. A more profound contradiction was brought to light: no longer was it a matter of making the educational system better respond to the needs of state monopoly capitalism, but rather to challenge the very rationale for seeking such an adaptation.

In facing these two problems the students began to understand—some more

than others—that the relations of teachers and students in the modern universities, are simply a reflection of the relations of social dependence and of alienation typical of a capitalist society.

They began to be aware that the contradiction of which they were the victims, was only a particular case in a system of dependence and alienation of which the exploitation of the working class represented the most striking and advanced expression. And from this were born some very fundamental demands:

First of all the demand for autonomy of the universities which, contrary to what M. Pompidou has said in the Assembly, has been recommended and outlined in the Project for democratic educational reform by our Party (p. 139).

This demand, which is also expressed in the Deans/ resolution condemning the absurd centralization of the system, implies two distinct ideas:

1. That the elected organs at all levels: institutes, faculties, universities and national councils, have decision making power and not just a consultative role.

This demand agrees precisely with the policy stated by our party according to which elected representatives are to be substituted everywhere for the agents designated by the central power. Just as we have proposed that the powers of the prefect be transferred to the president of the general council, so professors and students have demanded the replacement of the rector - who is presently a sort of prefect - -with a president elected by the university.

2. The students have stressed a second implication of the idea of autonomy: co-management, the participation of the students in the management of the universities. Here again this is what the Project as outlined by our Party has proposed (p. 139), suggesting a democratic counsel of the University, on a paritary basis.

As to the extent of the powers of these directing organs, what has been proposed coincides almost exactly with our project:

determining the needs of the universities with respect to personnel, facilities and materials

discussion of the programs and methods of teaching, and of the testing of students

Furthermore, the main idea from which the others are derived, that is, the participation of the students had already been clearly formulated in 1963 at the Congress of UNEF in Dijon by the 'Corpo des Lettres de Paris'. With respect to these two objectives, there is nothing which does not conform to the basic sense of our policy.

B. As the movement reached greater and greater masses of students and particularly following the qualitative change that took place following the brutal police repression, the goals of the movement broadened; as they increased in breadth, they came to correspond with the working class perspective as defined by the program of the French Communist Party.

It is remarkable, furthermore, that the radicalization of means preceded the radicalization of ends.

The very violent police reaction facilitated a clearer understanding of the nature of the Gaullist government. And this was the second important characteristic of the course taken by the movement: beginning with a partial struggle that concerned itself with objectives within the universities, there emerged a broad political challenge to the Gaullist regime.

It became apparent that one could not strike out against the structures of the university without, at the same time, coming up against the state apparatus and challenging the entire system.

C. The massive participation of the working class in the strike on the 13th of May constituted an important moment in the movement. The announcement of this strike alone brought the government to a first retreat and to concessions; it made it possible to reach a third level in the increasing awareness of a large number of students: after the struggle within the university and the political struggle, the problem of class was posed.

This is certainly not very clear to all the students (it is furthermore not clear to the majority of workers either, for if it were, they would all be militant revolutionaries).

But the problem has presented itself to the great masses of students for the first time very forcefully, and that is an eminently positive fact.

Admittedly it has presented itself only in terms of particular issues relevant to the students who, at first, opposed those aspects of the regime which have to do specifically with their own work, especially the industrialization of the University and the commercialization of culture.

Henceforth the students massively reject an education which has as its essential function to prepare them for integration into a society in which profit rules and in which "the imminent and coercitive law" as Marx has said, is production for the sake of production, and a university destined, in essence, to furnish managers for private enterprises.

They refuse to become wheels in this system, and they seek a culture which integrates technical needs into the system, rather than one which is subordinate to these technical needs.

No one challenges the need or the worthwhile nature of a link between science, research and production, but it is noteworthy that the monopolies do not conceive this link in the same manner as we do.

Let us say, in order to simplify, with respect to the teaching of the human sciences in the faculty of letters (notably psychology and sociology), and in the faculty of law the teaching of political economy isolated from the human sciences has reduced these disciplines to a question of management. Education aims less at ameliorating the forces of production, than at preserving the relations of production.

It is remarkable, furthermore, that the student demand for participation finds expression in the language and the concepts of Marxism, even if their use is often confused and dubious, and that the most frequent theme is alienation: the common denominator of the demands of the students is participation in historical initiative against the alienating weight of the structures.

II The Causes of a Mass Struggle

They can be stated in a couple of words: the Fouchet Reform and the immediate worsening of all the contradictions in the university system brought on by its application.

The most deeply felt consequences have been not only to maintain and accentuate the class discrimination and the anti-democratic nature of the university, but also to commit an injustice against even those who had already the privilege to be at the university.

In the first place, because the introduction into higher education of the short "Licence" produced the same cleavage as exists in the secondary school system between the long and short cycles.

In addition, because, more than ever before, the reform has separated technical training from reflection upon the ends and the meaning of work and society at all levels in all the disciplines.

From a practical point of view, the Fouchet Reform has worsened the employment crisis after graduation, not only in one or another branch (as in psychology and sociology) but also in a more general sense. While already before the reform, 72% of the students never obtained their "Licence," the prohibition against repeating a year, that is, eliminating a student after an initial failure, makes for additional obstacles especially for the students who work in addition to pursuing their studies. Even for those who succeed in getting beyond these obstacles, designed to eliminate students selectively, there is often no guarantee of a job.

The immediacy of these problems accounts for why the movement became so quickly a mass movement and one involving considerable combativeness.

Consciousness raising proceeds very quickly in such a movement. The strike of May 13th signified a step in this direction. It made it possible to situate the action of the students within the perspective of working class struggles. Since then three major ideas have become clear:

A consciousness of the intimate and profound relationship between this movement and the workers' movement;

The idea that a true revolution in our time cannot take place without the working class;

The idea that one can not have a socialist university in a capitalist world and that the solution of the university problem presupposes the solution of a much larger problem.

It is not therefore a matter of transforming the university first and then the society, but of making of the university a locus of change rather than an instrument for conserving this society.

Having stated these indispensable clarifications, which were in fact made in the action itself, one can pose the problem of the significance of the student struggle

from the standpoint of class struggle.

III Significance of the Student Struggles and their Relationship with the Struggles of the Working Class

This is a fundamental theoretical problem which determines the relation between the student struggles and those of the working class.

Given the fundamental idea that the principal revolutionary force is the working class, two methods of approach are possible in attempting to give a class analysis of the student movement and to define the significance of the working class for the student struggle. This must take account of the unique situation of the students, a situation which by definition, is transitory and preparatory: one can attempt to determine their status as a class either by their past (their social origin) or by their future (their future function).

One can first of all make a study of the social origins of the students and underline especially that they are, in the large majority, of middle class or lower middle class origins, with only 10% the sons of workers; these figures are the inverse of the national population. It would be perfectly legitimate to argue on this basis for the democratization of access to the University.

It would be false, however, to base our judgment about the meaning of the student movement from a class-perspective on this alone. If for example we should say that because of their social origins, the students do not constitute a homogeneous social group and that the fact that a considerable number of them comes from the lower middle class confers necessarily upon them the political characteristics of the petty-bourgeoisie man with its hesitations, its oscillations, etc. . . we content ourselves with a mechanistic sociology which has nothing to do with Marxist analysis. The practical consequences of this theoretical error are

disastrous. Without any doubt the social origins of the students have an effect upon their political behavior and weigh heavily upon them. But it is necessary to recall very clearly that this theoretical point of view was not Marx's at all, but it was rather Hippolyte Taine who suggested this sort of predestination and this mechanistic relation to the milieu of origin.

Class membership, according to Marx, has nothing to do with the milieu of origin, but rather with the place one occupies in the production process. None of the three criteria which he gives for defining a worker refers to the milieu of origin.

Starting with these criteria, one can approach the question of the students, with certain limitations, by defining them in terms of their future functions. From this point of view, a large number of students, especially those who are preparing for occupations related to the production process, who will become engineers, who will enter, as managers and executives into economic life and its management. Even those who are oriented toward scientific research, will occupy today a particular place in the production process: we have correctly and repeatedly said that in our time science has become a direct productive force.

It follows that those who are engaged in science constitute a social class, though such a class must necessarily have novel features:

Not only do they not own the means of production...like the workers they do not possess the instruments of production. But like the worker they too are producers of surplus value; they are an integral part of the "collective worker" about which Marx speaks in *Le Capital* (1, 2, pp. 30 to 52).

And a third criterion, the subjective one of class consciousness. For many years now, following the development of the productive forces, and particularly following the application of cybernetics to production, organization and management, these strata of intellectuals find themselves in conditions favorable to attaining an increasing awareness of the fundamental contradictions

as well as of the more recent contradictions of capitalism.

Clearly it is not only in anticipation of their future that the students experience these contradictions, that is, in reflecting on the contradictory role that will be assigned them by the system when they leave the university to become the managers of a system the ends and meaning of which are considered beyond discussion.

If it is true that the theme of alienation is so widespread, then this is because, in a more or less confused way - rather more than less - many students feel the increasingly relevant analogy between their particular situation and that of the worker in industry, even if, in the beginning, as we have noted, this analogy is conceived falsely. . . for example, in identifying the professor with the boss or with the state boss (just as in the first stages of the working class movement, as Engels recalls, the class struggle that was still instinctive and primitive vented its anger against machines or the foremen, and not against the capitalist system, itself).

This is why the working class and its Party can and must pave the way toward a true revolutionary consciousness among the students by striving to clarify the intimate and profound link between goals of the working class and the aspirations of the students (even if these aspirations still have Utopian and anarchic forms which can easily lead to diversion and provocation).

One must not lose sight of the new fact that there exists an objective class basis for the student struggle at the present level of the development of productive forces, and that this struggle has objectively revolutionary implications.

This objective basis explains that if, in the time of Marx and Engels (the one a son from the lower middle class and the other of the upper middle class) taking up the cause of the working class for intellectuals was a purely individual phenomenon - since it had only a subjective basis: "an understanding of the course of history" as Marx wrote the Manifesto - taking up this cause today

becomes a mass phenomenon since it rests on the objective basis of class relations linking the 'collective worker' (of which an increasing number of intellectuals are now an integral part) with the capitalist system.

Admittedly in the case of the students, because of their unique situation as future producers, the tendency will be to emphasize the future unilaterally, the perspectives and the ideological or even moral aspects of the problem, with all the risks of utopianism and anarchism implied thereby, and with the possibilities of demagogic and even police exploitation.

But none of this should obscure for us the essential issue, nor prevent us from seeing clearly the proper link between the class struggle of the workers and the student movement.

To rely upon the mechanistic analysis of vulgar sociology which accounts for class membership in terms of social origins alone would lead us toward a paternalistic view of the student movement in all its aspects as forever subordinate, a necessarily unpredictable ally as are, typically, the petty-bourgeois strata from which students generally come.

If however, we approach the problem in a more open fashion, in situating the role of the intellectual as an integral part of the 'collective worker' at a time when science has become a "direct productive force", and in seeing the situation of the student with respect to this future function, we will be able to correctly evaluate the link between the working class struggle and the struggle of the students.

The working class of France has defined its goals as follows:

It demands increased salaries, a decrease in working hours, active participation in the management of Social Security, increased powers for the workers' committees, democratic decision making in the enterprises. The common denominator of all these demands, aiming at a democracy which will open the way to socialism, is the fundamental demand that each worker, instead of being a

passive instrument in the hands of capital, become an active and creative participant in directing the economy against the rule of the monopolies, and in creating a political program which will substitute elected representatives for agents designated by the central power. Finally the working class demands, as the French Communist Party underlines, equal possibilities for all to have access to culture, a culture which is no longer in the service of the monopolies but a creation conscious of the future.

The student movement is perturbed by uncontrolled and adventurous ambitions, by provocations which divide it, weaken it and which make repression of the movement even easier. All this should make us even more aware of the need for vigilance, but it should not in any way obscure the intimate and profound link of this movement with the movement of the workers. The students are well situated to directly experience the malign influence of the monopolies; their very work makes them more sensitive to all the obstacles involved in actively participating in a search for the meanings and aims of society. Their struggle emphasizes this central aspect of the revolution and contributes toward making the revolution even more richly human.

To associate this movement with that of the workers, to be aware of the unity of their interests and to reinforce this unity, this is the mark of a common victory.

Why are these problems so acutely felt by this generation of students?

Because a considerable increase in the pace of human development has brought them to maturity at a moment of great historical upheaval.

More scientific and technical changes have occurred in the last twenty years than have occurred in the past two thousand years. A UNESCO report notes that there are more working scholars presently living in the world today than have existed since the origins of mankind.

Young people now twenty years old are of the same age as nuclear fission and

cybernetics.

From a social perspective, their fathers were contemporaries of the October Revolution, and they reach the age of consciousness on the morrow of the 20th Congress with all the new problems that this era posed. The young people are also of the same age as the great movements of national liberation and socialist revolution in Asia and Latin America. Until then, Europe and North America appeared to be the only centers of historical initiative and creators of value. The renaissance of non-western ancient civilizations, whose values have been quite different from the overriding concern for technical advancement and production for production's sake characteristic of Western capitalism, has posed problems and raised a number of questions for the young of today. The effect has been even greater since they are of the same age as radio and television. The whole world appears before them every day as has never been possible for any previous generation.

Thus are born, in spurts, moments of great questioning, vast revolts, a challenging of basic principles and of the meaning of life.

We should say, unreservedly, that this rapid change is a positive sign.

We, who are proud to belong to a revolutionary party, far from mourning history, welcome with joy this marvelous uplifting of the human condition.

It is, we believe, an important moment in the fight against the false capitalist order, for the construction of a new society and for the creation of new relationships between society, science, culture and art.

The first great challenge to the very principle of capitalism was that of Karl Marx and the Marxist parties.

The first revolution which defeated capitalism in a major country, and which, by its example, has threatened capitalism throughout the world, is the Socialist Revolution of October, 1917.

Why then, one might ask, does a student problem also arise in Warsaw or in Prague? Is it a general crisis characteristic of all "industrial societies" no matter their form of government? Is it a question perhaps of conflicting generations, the young rejecting the "consumer society" erected by their elders?

The question, in effect is posed in terms that are fundamentally different in capitalist society from socialist societies.

In a capitalist country "production for the sake of production" (and "consumption for the sake of consumption" - which is its corollary) is a consequence of the basic economic principles themselves, of which the exclusive motivating force is the law of profit.

It is not the same for socialist countries. What has made this difference difficult to see is that socialism has been introduced into countries which are technically and economically backward; they have had to accomplish two tasks at the same time: institute socialism and overcome underdevelopment. The interaction between these two fundamental tasks has necessarily required giving priority for long stretches of time to the expansion of production, making it possible to overcome their lack of economic development. Accomplishing this in socialist countries has been a matter of life or death; and it is true that what has really been a means of staying alive might have given the impression of being an end in itself.

It is important to add as well that certain subjective errors have resulted in the continuation, beyond the time required for development, of the extreme concentration and centralization of resources and powers, with all the bureaucratic and authoritarian distortions that this entailed.

The first country where such errors have become clearly apparent is precisely the only one of the socialist states which had begun the construction of socialism in an already highly industrialized country: Czechoslovakia. Correcting these errors

has been truly difficult, under the fire of implacable enemies who seek to exploit the situation, not in order to improve socialism, but in order to destroy it; but these corrections are underway and their success will provide a great example for the possibilities of socialism in a highly developed country.

In short, in the socialist societies, the tendency to emphasize matters concerning production and solving problems relevant to production, while neglecting all else, was only a temporary situation.

In capitalist countries there is no question of a temporary phenomenon, or of subjective errors and distortion, and there are no possibilities of reform. It is rather a permanent and necessary characteristic resulting from the objective conditions of the capitalist mode of production: a revolution is necessary in order to do away with the very laws of the regime.

Contrary to the thesis of Professor Marcuse, the soul of such a revolution is the working class the importance of which is continually increasing in numbers as well as in historical significance.

When, in France, more than 10 million workers go on strike, occupy the factories and hold the street, it is ironic to read in the book by Herbert Marcuse that "the workers are more and more ineffectual and resigned" (*L'Homme Unidimensionnel*, traduction française, Editions de Minuit, p. 55).

The thesis of Marcuse rests on three postulates: a restricted definition of the concept of revolution, an even more narrow definition of the working class, and an outmoded definition of the internal contradictions of the capitalist system.

The definition of revolution begins with Marx's analysis in the middle of the 19th century, based on the study of the contradictions of the most developed of capitalist societies at that time, England. Marx never intended this example to yield a concept of revolution that would be valid for all countries and for all times. Marcuse's generalization, then, constitutes an interpretation and a dogmatic dis-

tortion of Marx's thought.

Marx's aim was above all practical: he was concerned with changing the world. His theory is not fully understandable except in terms of this practice. The object of Marxism is to give man full responsibility for his own history. It is a conception of the world which is the basis of a methodology of historical 'initiative'. Marx teaches us how to determine rigorously, at each period of history and in the conditions unique to each country, *what is possible given the existing contradictions*.

A Marxist is therefore not an academic commenting on the texts of Marx, but rather a militant who has sufficiently understood the theses of Marx to be able to determine the specific contradictions unique to his people and to his moment of history.

Marcuse's definition of revolution is therefore restricted and empirical. This is likewise the case with his definition of the working class.

Marx never defined a social class by its standard of living: it is not the possession of a car or a television or a refrigerator which causes a worker to no longer be a worker.

In fact in this era, in which because of technical development science has become a direct productive force, not only is it not true that the working class is losing its importance either from a numerical point of view or from a historical point of view, but on the contrary, its importance is increasing in both numbers and influence.

First of all because an increasing quantity of technicians, engineers and research personnel become an integral part of the "collective worker".

Also because the mechanization of administrative work and the functions of management increasingly blurs the boundaries between an employee who has become a manipulator of calculating machines for example, and the worker,

working under conditions of automation.

Finally because the extension of the use of machines in agriculture changes a large number of workers in the countryside (drivers of tractors, for example) into workers very similar to workers in the factory.

Professor Marcuse poses a third problem: in industrialized societies, the working class can no longer exercise "a negating function", a revolutionary role in the society.

This thesis rests on a postulate: that this working class, in the broad sense that it has today, can no longer attain an awareness of the contradictions which place it in opposition to the capitalist system because these contradictions are in the process of disappearing.

In the present stage of the development of productive forces, not only has capitalism not overcome the contradictions discovered by Marx, between the forces of production and the relations of production, but new contradictions which did not exist in Marx's lifetime have appeared which confirm and aggravate the earlier ones.

They contribute toward making increasingly obvious and intolerable the irrationality of a system which requires the worker to take the maximum initiative in his technical tasks and to obey unconditionally the private or collective owners of the means of production.

The demand to participate actively in the determination of the aims and the meaning of production is therefore the common denominator of the aspirations of the students and the conscious goal of the working class.

The problem of the relations between them can not therefore be posed in terms of rivalry or of subordination (still less of antagonism). The worker movement and the student movement are both aspects of the same totality.

Marxism remains the most effective theoretical instrument for the revolutionary

transformation of the world. First, because it constitutes a scientific method making possible the theoretical determination of the new contradictions of the system. Further, in showing why the working class, in new conditions and new forms, remains the principal revolutionary force, it provides a scientific method making it possible to define the forces and the forms of their organization, capable of overcoming those contradictions.

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THE STUDENT MOVEMENT BETWEEN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE EXPLOITATION OF THE PROLETARIAT AND THE CRITIQUE OF CONSUMER SOCIETY

Text Written by the Activists of the C.R.I.R.

Written between the 8th and the 15th of May, this text is designed:

- to underline the theoretical crisis of the revolutionary workers' movement; we believe this crisis lies at the root of the ambiguities of the present political crisis with which the student revolt is struggling;

- to contribute to the discussion of the class nature of the educational system and the roles of the middle' strata which it is supposed to train;

- to pose the problem of how these middle strata can eventually participate in the revolutionary struggle;

- to clear the slate of the false dilemma: critique of consumer society or support for workers' struggles;

- to deduce from this what present tasks seem most pressing to us.

What is Revealed by the Student Movement

Although today various demonstrations of solidarity tend to hide the fact, it is clear that nobody had foreseen and that, indeed, nobody could have foreseen, what the students have done.

There is a good reason for this: the movement has been the momentary expression within the University of a total refusal of most of the values and commonly accepted categories of society at large, and of the behavior patterns that result from them. We refer not only to the values and categories of the

most "modernist" professors, but also to those of the most powerful leaders of the working class today, and those which the students themselves had adopted until now. This goes equally for the aspirations which some of the students now see as the basis of integration into the system, that is, the petty bourgeois fashion of living (in other words, "fashion"), and the desire to "succeed" in a good professional career. And it should be added that humanism is not far removed from careerism, for so many good reasons. This refusal of accepted values and categories belongs to a self-critique of the student union, of its inability to place its academic demands in a general framework; a critique of the magical formulae of the F.E.R. (Students and workers, all revolutionary, in a "united front"!!!) and of the reformist or even reactionary character of the main slogans of this movement (for full employment, against selective admission to the University!).

No doubt one could object to the preceding that it goes beyond the slogans formulated by the students. This reproach is indicative of the ambiguity of the support the students receive, and of the diversionary maneuvers being implemented through this support. For example, the support of professors who want to bring the enraged flock back to the fold of academic (and constructive) dialogue, and who go as far as to construct a theory of this diversion: contestation as an element of progress!!! (cf. the discoveries of M. Touraine, set forth in *Le Monde*); also, the support of leaders of the working class, concerned to assert the presence of an opposition to Gaullism..on the day after the massacres!

Those who thus try to minimize the movement play on the incoherent diversity of its slogans.

They refuse to see that this incoherence resulted from a combination of different things, or even from two different types of combinations:

- the combination of the slogans of each of the groups which are now

attempting to give the student movement a political program;

-the combination of these slogans with problems that go far beyond them, such as:

the role of the sociologist in the company, polling, and conditioning by advertising,

the role of teachers in the propagation of ideology,

the role of scientists in their relations with the army and industry.

He lies who pretends today—after the barricades—that the answer to these problems can be found in a political program that has been or is soon to be formulated. He is lying and must accept a certain responsibility for the consequences; that of leaving the participants of May 10th with only one alternative—despair or cynicism on the one hand, conformity or retreat into sectarianism on the other.

We have no political program to defend, and therefore we believe we speak the same language as the "*enragés*". It is on the basis of the same refusal that we — that is, a few former activists from the student movement — have been engaged in theoretical and practical research which is in itself a severe self-critique of our past practice and our present situation.

The students, by the violence and the numerical importance of their movement, have succeeded in provoking a debate, the stakes of which seem as vital to us as they are complex, a debate which we have until now been incapable of provoking in the large masses stirred up by the students.

Is it possible for us, will we be capable of being revolutionaries?

We too want to contribute to opening this path, if it exists, between despair and integration. The difference between the students and us — for the moment — is that we have had bad experiences with politics, experiences which have certainly left deep stigmas which we will have to learn to eliminate.

Between them and us have come the Situationists with their attempt to demystify everyday life, work and politics, their will to expose the ideology of production/consumption; Maoism has come with its preoccupation with escaping economic determinisms and its attempt to start a radical struggle against them on the ideological level, without however leaving the concrete domain of the everyday life of the masses.

But the student movement reveals that even these answers, which go far beyond the politics of the sixties, are insufficient, at least for our country and no doubt for all the advanced industrialized countries.

They are insufficient because they do not say how, in a country where the proletariat is no more than 35% of the population, the other non-bourgeois strata are to be understood (we propose to clearly define the terms that we use in this introduction): are these strata potentially revolutionary (the New Left) or reactionary (the social basis of revisionism, of the restoration of capitalism)?

This is the most urgent question for the students, who are at the University to become members of these strata. It is an even more urgent question for us who are already members of them.

The research we for our part have attempted has so far been an essentially theoretical reflection. We did not want to continue to consider Marxism as a treasure chest that would be ready for use on the day when..

We have opened the chest and lost some illusions, but we have gained too since today theory no longer seems so far removed from action and so cut off from it, even if both still remain problematical.

At the moment when the student movement is at a crossroads, on the morrow of an action that changed quite a few things, which, more specifically, opened up the possibility of facing difficult questions with some enthusiasm, we offer the results we obtained to criticism. May this criticism help us escape the risks

inherent in the method which we chose (scientism, academism, and no doubt paternalism).

What is the Place of the "Middle Strata" in the Relations of Production

We are not going to solve a problem here which everyone has failed to solve. We will only expose a failure, that of traditional Marxist political economy, seek its origin and propose a hypothesis.

The Failure of the Traditional Marxist Analysis

Marxism defines a class by its place in the relations of production. Let us outline the criteria that are used:

- ownership of the means of production,
- production, or rather creation, of values (the goods) a part of which are appropriated by others, surplus value,
- power of decision and repression.

The bourgeoisie is defined as the owner of the means of production employing wage earning workers. This definition presupposes that the means of production and production itself can be defined without ambiguity. It is impossible to pretend to do this today, considering the increasing importance of the so-called unproductive sector. Do the owners of such powerful companies as MANPOWER (temporary work) or PUBLICIS (advertising) own means of production (or could it be that they do not belong to the bourgeoisie!)? Certainly, one could object that Marx admits the role of commercial and financial capital, that is to say the bourgeoisie, in creating the instruments required for the commercialization of goods, the realization of surplus value. But the bastard status of this sector in theory (which almost introduces a marginalist analysis) would seem to imply that its relative share must necessarily remain rather small. We will see

that this question appears with sufficient force on so many points that it is impossible to avoid it.

The proletariat is constituted by the totality of the wage earning producers, that is, those who by their work create value and only receive part of it in the form of wages. The rest is surplus value, the fruit of the exploitation of proletarian labor by capital. We are faced with the same question again: where does production, the creation of value and surplus value end, with material goods only, or with services? And a second question: do all wage earners produce surplus value, are there not exploitative wage earners? (corporation presidents are "wage earners")?

If Marx stopped at these approximations, it was partly because they were operative in his day (wage earning corporation presidents did not yet exist.) It was also because he predicted a bi-polarization in two social classes: the bourgeoisie, incessantly reduced by the process of concentration, and the ever increasing proletariat whose work would become simpler and simpler, more and more homogeneous. But the capitalist system did not evolve in that direction.

1) A steadily increasing number of people work in the sectors that were considered unproductive in Marx's terms: the management and distribution sectors, the educational system (there are about 10% tradesmen, 12% employees, 10% middle level cadres.) We thus do not know how to place them in the relations of production: almost all of them are simply consumers of the surplus value produced by the proletariat.

Without talking here about their "usefulness" or "uselessness," the following fact must first be stated: Marxist theory does not allow us to situate the ad-man and the construction worker, the marketing engineer and the saleslady in the department store with respect to each other on the basis of economic interests. It forbids us to go as far as to say that the one is exploited by the other. For us

this seems to be an initial failure.

2) In industry itself properly speaking, we find a stumbling block in those wage earners who do skilled labor, the technicians and engineers. The hierarchy of salaries that exists here and which slowly penetrates the socialist countries of Europe, can neither be justified (as the French Communist Party would have it) nor attacked with the help of the concepts of Marxist theory:

-neither with the concept of complex work, complex work being a multiple of simple work, taken as a reference point.

-nor that of labor power, which capital buys in paying out wages.

There is no satisfying instrument to effect the decomposition of complex work into simple work. The contribution of a wage earner to production cannot be evaluated on this basis.

Nor are there instruments to evaluate labor power in order to distinguish between what is *necessary* for a worker (to live, reproduce his labor power) and what is *necessary* for an executive.

How then can we avoid giving in to empiricism? The tendency at this point is to accept the marginalist theory. Then one can propose either to give people wages that are proportional to their marginal productivity (although this productivity depends intrinsically on the present organization of the labor process), or one can postulate that productivity is proportional to the duration of studies, which is a purely reformist theoretical *coup de force*.

Marxism gives us another pertinent concept for the analysis of the middle strata which is no longer directly economic, that of the technical and the social division of labor. The first is the result of the technical requirements of production alone, the second expresses the political and ideological exigencies of the maintenance of the social structure and especially class relations. Positions in the technical division of labor are inscribed in the present state of the productive

forces, whatever the social structures that are indispensable to the maintenance of production in its present state. On the contrary, the others (the foreman, the cop, the bourgeois ideologue) can be dispensed with in a different social structure. Thus the problematic of the indispensable and the useless reappears in a domain which does not coincide with that of production. These notions are perhaps simplistic: it is for instance not certain that there exists at any given moment a clearly determined technical distribution of tasks, but this notion is perhaps not a theoretical dead-end. It has never progressed for political reasons that we will examine later. Its most recent use in France was unfortunate: in 1964 when Althusser explained in *Nouvelle Critique* that the professor-student relation was a purely technical one. The bureaucrats of theory, the academic Marxists, suppressed the problem for two years: they could not bury it.

Consequences of Theoretical Failure

This theoretical failure has had serious consequences for the workers movement. In the capitalist countries the Communist Parties retained only those elements of Marxist theory that favored their evolution toward social-democratization. Thus they used the model of bi-polarization, based on the hypothesis of simpler and simpler work, in order to "isolate the monopolies": the class enemy was reduced to the 200 families in 1936. Today it is reduced to a handful of monopolists; concepts such as "the national interest" and "the interests of the people" are invented.

The use of the notion of the people can be meaningful in China and Vietnam where it can be defined as the union of workers and peasants (90% of the population according to Mao). In France it can only be a reformist potpourri. The French Communist Party has thus based its strategy on support for the demands of all the non-monopolistic strata; it is opposed to the reduction of wage

differentials, saying that executives have special needs, especially for leisure! The engineer from Sceaux²⁸ needs nature more than the worker from Vitry....In other words it legitimizes and alibis the whole present social structure, except for the capitalists' title to their factories. By doing so it prepares at most for a State capitalism with a new bourgeoisie, rebuilt on the basis of all the hierarchical advantages of power and knowledge. This new bourgeoisie would lack juridical status, but it would be a functional bourgeoisie nevertheless. That is why the doubts of the students about the content of the tasks they will later perform, their denunciation of the bourgeois University and their Critique of repressive roles, are so profoundly opposed to the entire electoralist strategy of the French Communist Party.

This is however clearly vital today. What fundamental changes would be brought about by a socialism in which the same workers would go every morning, subjected to the same advertising, to the same factories where they would find the same tasks and be under the orders of the same foremen? They have emptied the idea of socialism.

In the socialist countries the slogan "to each according to his work," which determines the principle of socialist distribution, became meaningless when the question arose of setting the wages of the engineer with respect to those of the worker. One was satisfied with approximate intuitions: to give qualified personnel better pay. The Soviet salary scale differs from ours especially by the lower incomes of certain workers (doctors, teachers.)

According to the ideological balance of power and especially to the power of socialist ideas in the consciousness of the workers, the leaders of the Eastern countries adopt very different policies.

The recent movements in Czechoslovakia have been marked by the cadres' demands for higher wages. Besides demanding liberalization, they want to align

their status with that of their Western homologues. *L'Humanité* (May, 1968) explains that the Czech economic crisis is caused by too narrow a salary scale: it was alright in 1948, but why should one now work harder if it does not result in an improvement in one's standard of living (other than general improvement). Indeed, what progress in twenty years!

Castro on the other hand, commits Cuba to a radical struggle against economism.

China is another counter example. It limits its salary scale to one to three and the Cultural Revolution had as its goal to prevent the reconstitution of some sort of functional bourgeoisie, or at least, of a rigid bureaucratic hierarchy. No pretense is made of setting salaries according to economic variables, but instead they are set in terms of the ideological and political risks. The Chinese Revolution represents a break with economism at the theoretical level.

This appears clearly in the explanations of the Cultural Revolution provided by the U.J.C. (M.-L.)²⁹ The bourgeoisie is no longer "defined" there by a property qualification, but by many different criteria: power, ideology, intellectual work. However these definitions are extremely loose and lack rigor. Sometimes allusions are made to the differentiating mechanisms which persist in socialist society. Sometimes the new bourgeoisie is presented as a historical survival of capitalism. These discussions are still lacking in any theoretical rigor. They are forgotten by our Marxist-Leninist comrades when they speak of French realities: but it is clear that *differentiating mechanisms* (in particular the inequality of knowledge) are already at work in the capitalist countries just as they play a role in the socialist countries, and that there is no reason to speak of them for China and not for France. The M.-L. comrades have thus said nothing pertinent about the University for six months: their program of May 10 (50% workers' and peasants' sons in the University, alphabetization by the teachers, periodic manual

work for the intellectuals) hastily plastered some ideas from the Cultural Revolution onto a wholly different situation, and gave them an absurd reformist aspect. These mistakes reveal the fact that today it is impossible to have an adequate revolutionary practice (in China as here) by simply defining oneself as a Marxist-Leninist, a guardian of a ready-made theory. Those who do not recognize the crisis of socialist thought today will end up in failure or remain mere *groupuscules*.

We are now going to try to present a critical interpretation of the role of the middle strata in the Economy. We will not emphasize the technical role of researchers, engineers and technicians in the organization of technical innovation and the development of the productive forces. Because this is a cherished theme of the dominant ideology, the leitmotiv of reformist apologetics and of the electoralist flatteries of the Communist Party. Because we do not intend to produce a balanced academic discourse but to present the elements of a critique which has always been suppressed. Because the question today is the following: in what respect are the middle strata in the service of the bourgeoisie, in what respect is the University which has trained them bourgeois? Finally, we will not reaffirm the Marxist postulate according to which a class can only be revolutionary when it incarnates the development of the productive forces (cf. the peasantry in China): it is necessary and sufficient that it be profoundly unsatisfied with the present and that it discover an interest in a viable social model which is judged superior by the social strata which it needs as allies. It is impossible to be satisfied with the mechanistic interpretation that has been found in Marx: the ideology of a class is a revolutionary one because this class embodies the productive forces.

One must however recognize the following inevitable problem: what are the relations between the ideology of a class and its relations to the productive

forces? What specific reasons does this or that class have to formulate goals that correspond to a superior model? A correct answer to that question must first eliminate the Marxist schema that has led to the reformist idea: technical intellectuals are the revolutionary class because they are linked to the present development of the productive forces.

Such a correct answer should nevertheless allow for a better understanding of the political interests of these social strata and the generality of the contradictions they experience.

An Attempt at an Economic Critique: The Role of the Middle Strata in the Capitalist Response to the Threat of Overproduction

This chapter is inspired by *Monopoly Capital*, a book by two American Marxists, Baran and Sweezy, not yet translated into French. We do not accept all of their presentation, but just one of their main hypotheses: the middle strata are often parasites, well paid "unemployed," destined to maintain the level of effective demand, limit the number of proletarians and avoid the reduction of work time. These ideas may seem exaggerated: we introduce them into the present debate as a plausible hypothesis of extraordinary importance.

For Marx, crises of overproduction would result from a disequilibrium between the supply of manufactured goods and effective demand by companies for producer goods, by private parties for consumer goods, The bourgeoisie-proletariat bi-polarization and the pauperization of the proletariat were to limit the buying power of the masses: production was thus expected to grow faster than consumption, at least in the sector of consumer goods, and crisis was inevitable.

This schema presupposed that the capitalists — under conditions of perfect competition — were incapable of planning and coordinating and would be

unable to find the means to limit production and to promote the sufficient growth of consumption. In other words, that entrepreneurs were only responsive to tomorrow's gain and blind to the crisis of the day after tomorrow. In certain sectors today (agriculture-food, for example) absolute over-production corresponding to the saturation of basic needs, must be added to this relative overproduction (under-consumption).

Crises have not been entirely overcome (cf. the present crisis) but have become very limited. It is not enough to say that monopolization, planning and the state sector facilitate anti-crisis mechanisms. It is still necessary to show how supply has been limited and demand raised in the context of the immediate logic of capitalism.

Production can be limited by not using the full productive capacity, by reducing the total number of working hours. (This is the case with the over-equipped steel industries of America which operate at only 70% capacity.) To achieve this it is possible to vary the number of hours per worker (reduction of the length of the working day, increase in the length of payed vacations), or the absolute number of workers. Finally it is possible to favor dead end production which, while not precisely oriented toward the consumer market, leads to no new production (armaments: the share of the military in the American G.N.P. has gone from 0.7% in 1927 to 1.4% in 1933 and 10.3% in 1957.) Science, especially in the form of space research (from which little is to be expected) is a form of expenditure of the surplus.

Consumption can be increased by increasing salaries (and in fact the buying power of the workers themselves has grown), but also by the multiplication of certain types of jobs involving management, public relations, and distribution, which are not absolutely necessary but which keep people busy and through which the surplus is redistributed.

Capitalism can, for example, allow itself to maintain the size of technically backward social strata. Here is the explanation for the prolonged maintenance of a supernumerary small peasantry in France until the middle of the 20th century. The goal behind this maneuver is both economic and political (conservative electorate.) Even at the present time, after the massive rural exodus of the last 20 years, about 800,000 people are estimated to be necessary to maintain the present level of production rather than the 1,700,000 presently employed. Thus capitalism has significant degrees of freedom which it uses as best it can to protect its interests. The disadvantages of maintaining an excessively large number of peasants are that they do not consume, because of their low incomes, and that they cannot play an organic ideological role in the service of the bourgeoisie.

It is thus not astonishing that capitalism rather tends to create parasitic jobs in the tertiary sector where it can give them a modernistic ideological function. Having done so, it profits in two ways: it limits the growth of the number of proletarians (which would imply either an increase in production or a reduction of work time), and increases effective demand to grow. This is all the more effective to the extent that these cadres are generally well paid. Thereby it creates a buffer stratum, politically associated with itself by its privileges—the prestige of intellectual work and salaries. It has therefore been possible to call these workers the well paid unemployed.

Of course this analysis is schematic. But it suffices to look at some extreme professions to understand that this schema corresponds to a reality. For example, advertising is an important phenomenon: 1% of G.N.P. in France, more than 2% in the USA (by comparison the French military budget represents 4% of G.N.P.) This sort of activity is not productive, even in the marginalist sense of the term; at the sectorial level the advertising of Shell, Esso, Elf does not induce more

consumption. If these firms did not advertise (by mutual agreement) they would sell just as much gasoline. But what would they do with their surplus?³⁰ The case is similar for the pharmaceutical companies which every morning flood every doctor with two or three kilograms of advertising such as fancy journals which he does not even open. Advertising does not even play the role of orienting people toward innovations: it is most developed in the sectors of food, clothing, cars, which are on the borderline of absolute over-production. It thus has as its sole economic function to maintain what the Keynesians call the propensity to consume, that is to say the system's capacity to function at the same level in the same way, to produce for production's sake.

There is a similar inflation of the bureaucracy: in agriculture itself, a sector which is in full decline, the producers' federations assemble an administrative plethora which plays an essentially political role under the cover of research, statistics, etc. Official bureaucratization can serve to create private parasitic jobs: hence the artificial (legal) obligation to take courses at driving schools.

Finally there is an inflation of the managerial and distribution sectors. In some sectors (clothing for example) numerous shops or intermediaries are maintained. The multiplication of distribution points (gasoline), the inflation of managerial and public relations positions. Compare in this regard the three secretaries of the Leclerc chain—with the hundreds in the Prisunic, Printemps and other chains.

It thus appears that capitalism has potential choices, which are not for that matter ever explicit, conscious ones. The "choice" is not made in terms of an economic objective, as is asserted, but for the sake of the political and ideological interests of the bourgeoisie. Thus capitalism could, *apriori*, especially with automation and technical progress, either reduce work time—which has the inconvenience of increasing the number of proletarians—or create new jobs for the "paid jobless." It also has degrees of freedom in the establishment of the

salary scale (which varies rather widely from one country to another.) This testifies to the fact that the apologists lie when they constantly present capitalist growth as the only (and the best) path of development, and when they present the content of this growth as determined by necessary economic laws. More broadly, those who refuse to pass on to the critique of the content of this growth provide justifications for the very substance of the system: economism, here as in China, is a type of reformism. It has deep roots even in the work of Marx. We know today how military investments, determined by political and ideological choices, orient scientific research and thereby also the content of technical innovations and the resulting development of the productive forces. Socialism cannot be defined today simply as the instrument of a higher development of the productive forces.

The Ideological System

In sum, the economic role of the middle strata has diverse characteristics, which are not free from a certain ambiguity.

Their activities have obvious technical aspects: who could build a cement dam without calculating its thickness? In any case the proportion of technique in the activity varies with the socio-professional categories involved.

Some of them have a role in production; but many others have a role in the maintenance of demand and in the organization of production within the framework of goals that have been imposed from above (economic and urban planning, market surveys.)

It has been shown in every case that the middle strata have in common an important role in the resolution of the problem of overproduction (artificially high salaries, numerical inflation, the explicit goal of their activity.)

They also play an important role in the maintenance of the relations of production, even though this role varies widely according to their type of work: they maintain the social hierarchy by contributing to the exclusion from decision-making power of those who do not hold the proper qualification.

Can one, for that matter, speak of an ideological unity of the middle strata? For that it is necessary to examine whether they are situated in a univocal relation with respect to the dominant ideology.

The Dominant Ideology

This is an ideology which justifies everyone's place in production and consumption. It has a pretension to be universal and total: it can explain everything.

At present, one of its essential elements is the notion of progress. It asserts:
 -at the social level: the univocal character of the development of the productive forces, the expression of which is a quantitative increase in goods. This development is optimally insured by the present distribution of tasks, tasks which correspond to different qualifications and which imply no privilege in the rest of life (equality before the law, for example.) This is the "democracy of labor." Social justice is the equality of all before the educational system.

Its realization is inscribed in the very development of the system. At the individual level it takes the form of the idea of self-realization in consumption and in leisure.

This self-realization is universal: all are equal before consumption (everyone can buy a television for example.) Of course this equality is not perfect now, but that is exactly what progress is all about. Once again it is enough to wait because the present system is the only one which makes possible the achievement of equality.

This is a "one-dimensional" ideology: everything is reduced to the production of (material) goods for the market and to the consumption of these goods. On this production-consumption axis, progress is the idea of a homothetic transformation which does not overthrow the social structure. What is more, as a consequence of "one-dimensionality," all contestation is retrograde because the development of this system is the only progress possible.

This ideology makes all specific analysis of situations unnecessary; little matter that there are not enough sons of workers in the University because that will soon be achieved.

In fact, it functions in a "circle": the fact creates the right, which is itself justified by the fact.

The majority of students fail their exams, therefore selective admissions are needed. Once the selection has been made there are no longer so many failures, which proves that selection was needed. Of course this discourse is never reduced so completely to its skeleton. But who can pretend to know how to compare the costs of failures with those of selection? The justification of the cost criterion would in any case send us back to a circular argument.

In sum, there is a double lie: such an ideology is not an explanation, and its discourse does not apply to every problem.

The Value Systems

The dominant ideology affects all socio-professional strata, but it expresses itself differently in each of them. Each group valorizes particular aspects of its professional activity as represented in the dominant ideology (thus: competence, power or property.) Similarly, each group valorizes particular forms of consumption (volume, style.)

For example, unskilled lab technicians, execute a narrowly specialized task

completely separate from the "creative" work of the research boss. They receive a salary similar to that of a worker. How can this white collar proletariat stand the power of the boss and the spectacle of the substantial advantages which he draws from the manipulation of the image of scientific competence in the society (high salary, trips, multiple remunerations for consultation)? He accepts all this because he has interiorized the valorization, asserted by the dominant ideology, of scientific competence as expressed in diplomas. The lab technician himself then needs a system of compensations, and this role is played by the distinction which he draws between himself and the industrial proletariat. Unable really to live this distinction, he signifies it in an imaginary way by his style of consumption and the belief in the superiority of non-manual labor.

The engineer has practically no decision-making power over the investments and the projects of the company. But it is he who decides on the organization of the production process accomplished by the technicians and workers. He too valorizes technical competence and thereby justifies his own power, but he can be led by this very attitude to demand a share in the power of the technocrat. He already seeks to close the gap by his style of consumption (house in the country, beautiful cars, etc. ..)

For him progress is his future participation in the direction of the company which, according to the dominant ideology, requires only patience on his part. From this reformist perspective, he does not associate with his subordinates, but seeks to increase the distance which separates him from them. It remains to be seen whether, in the face of the rejection he will encounter, he will internalize his failure or be led to criticize at least certain aspects of the system.

Thus each group resembles all the others insofar as it participates in the same dominant ideology, while, on the contrary, each one differentiates itself by its value system.

This latter is imprinted on it by education (understood in the broad sense: family, school street, priests, doctors) which thus plays a double role: recognition through failure of the division of the society according to competence, and justification of this differentiation.

Dysfunctions, Escapist Mechanisms, Reintegration

This system necessarily has gaps, breakdowns; it bears its own contradictions in itself. Thus cases of slippage between values systems and reality are always appearing. An example is offered by the maladaptation of teaching to the development of the technical and social division of labor in France. Or again, it may become clear that the dominant ideology of competence does not describe the real distribution of power.

Thus this society, which holds its functioning up as a model and which proposes its values as universal norms of development, must reject the abnormal situations which it secretes: delinquency, slums and foreign workers, the blacks in the USA, mental illnesses which, in the most integrated societies, are the necessary counterpart of the reduction of "normal" man to one-dimensional man.

However, there exist more subtle types of breakdowns, even for those whom the system does not reject. Time does not always bring about the increase in what has been acquired: increased leisure secretes more boredom than happiness. Even cadres are victims of the present unemployment, which is due to a policy of monetary accumulation in view of massive investments upon the entry of the economy into the Common Market. The *Observateur* describes the sad story of an unemployed cadre who stays home to run errands, wash dishes and give the baby its bottle.

Spontaneous Responses to Dysfunctions

But the system itself produces mechanisms designed to overcome local breakdowns, which are thus more or less immediately co-opted. These escapist mechanisms displace the objective conflict resulting from local breakdowns toward different forms of escape. This is, an aspect of the very operating mechanism of the system. The local breakdowns are displaced, the objective conflict remains. The system reproduces itself.

There are at least four categories of possible responses to dysfunctions: reformist hopes, the endless escape along the one-dimensional production-consumption axis, the escape into the imaginary, global contestation.

a) Their ideological function tends to make the executive elites flee most often into reformism. This maintains the illusion of the possibility of a realization of the perfect rationality of the technicistic system.

Thus the suppression of monopolies and a few nationalizations are thought to be all that is required to achieve a better allocation of resources in terms of the needs of the workers, who themselves are assumed to constitute the entire population. These illusions are taken up by the unions or the French Communist Party. When presented as radical, these demands are doubly mystifying because they give the impression that capitalism can be transcended while retaining technicist rationality.

b) In the middle strata one observes all the variations of escape along the production-consumption axis (cf. the example of the technician.) It is said that democracy is attained thanks to social mobility and the equality of all before consumption (mass consumption.) In fact, the search for social distinction is one of the escape mechanisms, and democracy is only the possibility of choosing the way of signifying one's distinction (the purchase of signs).

Some, the social position of which is not likely to lead to direct promotion, can

attempt to escape in a way which conforms to the ideology of qualification by taking night courses (P.S.T. for example). These lead in ten or fifteen years to an engineer's diploma, with negligible chances of success. The failure they will encounter will only be the more bitterly resented.

The workers, who are forced to renounce the real amelioration of their work conditions, seek an escape in the satisfaction of needs produced by the society (TV, cars) even when more basic needs are scarcely satisfied. In this case the repression is at its strongest; the worker is not only one-dimensional, but one-directional.

c) The reflex of associating competence and superiority is created in the school. When the work situation prevents the individual from valorizing his competence, he will seek to assert his superiority in other areas, leaving the situation of real conflict unchanged (the search for leadership in various types of social relations, even if only in cinematographic erudition).

d) Finally, when even these possibilities of escape do not seem accessible to the individual, there remain only two other possibilities for him:

- the personal internalization of failure,
- radical contestation of the system.

In the first case, which ranges from dreaming to neurosis, he can eventually be reintegrated to the system with the help of psychiatrists and psycho-analysts. Their role is limited to overcoming certain abnormal effects of the system, not going so far as to denounce the social causes.

Agents of Repression and Integration

The establishment and the maintenance of these spontaneous mechanisms for overcoming conflicts constitutes an important aspect of a great many professional activities.

-The critique of the ideological function of teachers and professors is an old and always repressed critique, particularly in the teaching milieu itself. The failures encountered by innovative pedagogues result essentially from the fact that they have always under-estimated the political dimension both of the pedagogical relation and of the implicit ideology of the content they teach: for lack of engaging simultaneously in a political critique they fail in the face of the resistance of their colleagues and their students.

-Some doctors have begun the critique of their relation to the patient. Indeed, the medical profession profits from this relation to obtain an exceptional income (an average of one million Old Francs (about \$2000) a month)³¹. It will be practically impossible to make a dent in this bastion of conservatism from within: its transformation will only occur when vigorous denunciation has destroyed its prestige in the eyes of the masses.

-The March 22nd Movement has brought out the role of psychosociologists in the practice of companies and of sociologists in theorizing ideology.

-The advertising man plays an obvious role: his work aims at making new needs appear, that is to say, at consolidating those values which are most favorable to the production-consumption system. He is the instrument through which all aspirations are reduced to increased consumption. He uses every type of lie to achieve this end.

-The case of the scientists is one of the purest and most complex. As the source of "technical progress," science is always considered as a primordial growth factor. At the same time, it participates, through military and spatial research in the consumption of the surplus. The ideology of knowledge and competence is expressed in it to the highest degree; it passes for the noblest expression of technicist values and their humanistic dimension: creation.

The leaders of the scientific community are willing to play the role of

representatives of science before the public. They utilize their prestige as "creators" to present science and its values as the source of progress for the whole society. They offer it as a model of the supreme self-realization of the individual; the deontology of knowledge becomes a social ethic. (Monod.)

We know that the mask of competence often hides nothing more than a bigger ambition, luck and better conformity to the social model. For young scientists it is no longer a matter of demanding merely a "truly meritocratic relation" but of rejecting the traditional hierarchical relation and the social signification of their work.

In fact the hotshots of Research abandon control over the development of research in exchange for tips given them by management and the military apparatus (salaries, tours disguised as congresses). And they do so on behalf of technocratic requirements (the role of "big science" in the absorption of surplus and the development of new techniques of repression as in the case of sociologists.)

In the last analysis, by thus permitting the development of the tertiary sector and the financial and ideological valorization of the work of cadres (rather than reducing work time, for example), this capitalist system succeeds in resolving not only its economic problems but also its political problems. It gives the cadres a conservative, repressive buffer function, which insures the ideological cohesion of the system.

An Example: The Students

The University has a special character insofar as it condenses in latency several causes of dysfunction.

-While transmitting technical knowledge, it has a special role to play in the transmission of value systems. An initial source of contradictions emerges when

the value system is inadequate to the task. The possibility of this contradiction is already a source of anxiety to the student who notices it, as is evident in the case of sociologists and psycho-sociologists. (They are educated in the values of the "purity" of research and the neutrality of science, and risk being employed in the service of the corporations of the capitalist regime.)

To overcome this contradiction the perfect solution within the framework of the present system would be complete bureaucratization (total separation of tasks), accompanied by a corresponding division of disciplines (complete specialization). But this solution encounters limits, and in fact this contradiction permanently threatens the system. The division of tasks is in constant evolution. There will always be tasks to which no value system inculcated in the University will correspond. At present, the gap between teaching and reality is sidened by the lack of vocational orientation at school, by a system of selection by failure which imposes on everyone without distinction the value system which corresponds essentially to the traditional tasks to which higher education leads (research, teaching).

But at this point the gap between teaching and reality experienced by most students can be grasped by them as a necessary aberration of the system. Thus they will more easily escape the individual interiorization of the sentiment of failure and will be able collectively to call the system into question.

-Moreover, the University's conservative structure leads at present to a juxtaposition of the values of liberalism (the former dominant ideology) and those of technicism. As a result, the reigning value system of the University is contradictory in itself because it is heterogeneous. Instead of playing its role of universal justifier, it can bring out the arbitrary character of all the dominant values. It can thus lead spontaneously to a contestation which, even if it has nihilistic aspects, can also lead to a revolutionary critique of the system based on

the analytic element it contains.

Thus among students, and certain students in particular, there are specific causes which have brought their revolt to this degree of intensity. And it would be vain to believe that the simple effect of destructive slogans on the city walls is going to extend the revolt to the whole population. But it can be postulated that what stirred us up, the contradictions and discontents which move us, our hatred of lies, the anger in the face of this rigid world, also exist in other forms everywhere around us and that people will be able to rise to change the society to various degrees, depending on their class situation.

And Now What are Our Tasks?

We must struggle on two fronts. Against the intellectualism of those who would like to act as though a revolutionary movement could survive in the University alone. Against the evacuation of the movement toward the exclusive problems of the workers, which abandons the intellectuals and the middle strata to their sad fate.

In the first place we say that the proletariat has more reasons to revolt than the other classes. If our analysis is correct, it bears the weight of the system, by the intensity and the length of its work and the inflation of the middle strata which live in part on its back. It is also the victim of the same reductive mechanisms, the same lies. It sums up in its person both exploitation and alienation. But it is not capable by itself of dismantling the ideological justifications made in the name of the technical rationality of the system. To nourish a revolutionary ideology in the proletariat, the functioning of the dominant ideology, by which it too is victimized, must be brought to consciousness and beaten back. For that the proletariat needs to find allies in the middle strata who articulate ideological demystification loudly and clearly, who rip the tissue of lies, who thereby modify

the respectful vision which the proletarians may have of certain strata, who bring criticism back to life.

This is the task of external critique. It cannot be accomplished in isolation, for it is necessary to verify the masses' understanding of our ideas, to correct them and enrich them. This is why we think it necessary to try experiments which make it possible to establish an immediate relation with the life conditions and problems of the working masses. Such experiments must find real support and theoretical nourishment in the external critique that we give ourselves as a task.

But it is possible, even though the middle strata profit today from certain aspects of the situation, that elements of these strata end up by espousing a revolutionary project which in the last analysis would assure them a more satisfying life. We have given some indications of the internal problems which, in the very practice of these strata, can be organically linked to general contradictions; the lie assumes particular forms here.

Why should we deprive ourselves of the possibility of also using the specific contradictions of a stratum, which can be linked to more general contradictions, in order to shake it to its foundations, eventually to divide it and to win a part of it to a revolutionary struggle? Such can be the case with the student milieu.

The movement of criticism of bourgeois society begun in the University must be amplified, enriched, deepened. It must reach out on firm bases into the various social strata (teachers, scientists, doctors, economists, engineers, and technicians). There must be no reformist goals, but a demystifying critique destined to bring forth revolutionary motivations and to modify the perception that each stratum has of the others,

As for theoretical work, it will be the result of a political will; the social sciences will have to become the science of social formations. For the moment in any case, they are oriented in a way that represents the ideology of the system to a great

extent, for example, at the level of the limitation-of fields of research and methodology (cf. fads, formalization, structuralism...).

Another goal of a critique, both external and internal, is to constantly keep up the pressure against microscopism, against economism. But each result obtained, each conquest of socialist thought must be popularized, and criticized.

TO ACCOMPLISH THESE TASKS, FORM GROUPS FOR STUDY, CRITIQUE, STRUGGLE

Part III: Future Prospects

[Introduction]

This section contains a theoretical pamphlet, "Bourgeois Elections or Revolutionary Action." The continuing chaos in the factories during the decline of the movement explains the enthusiasm of the writers of the pamphlet. They are busy preparing the theory of the next phase even as its initial phase ends in defeat.

"Bourgeois Elections or Revolutionary Action" is among the most interesting attempts to define a long term strategy during the May Events. *La Voie* (The Way) which published it was (is?) a small Trotskyist organization. However, unlike some of the other Trotskyist groups active during May, it did not declare itself the vanguard of the movement. Nor did it insist on its own organizational continuity as did some others. The pamphlet thus shows none of the sectarian defects one might have expected and is an authentic product of the Movement.

La Voie attempts to synthesize all the various aspects of the real struggle in order to project a path toward the formation of a new revolutionary party in France capable of competing with the Communist Party for hegemony in the working class. The strategy and goals of the May movement are accepted at the outset as is the (revolutionary) legitimacy of the organizational forms which it spontaneously produced. The problem raised by the authors is then: how to pass from this basis produced by the Movement to a long term struggle capable of preparing a victory in the next round.

The answer they give is probably the best that could have been given at the time from the standpoint of the revolutionary left. Contrary to those who were

attempting to build up pre-existing vanguard sects by individual recruitment and those who hoped to start a new revolutionary "movement" through an agreement among prominent leaders of the Events, *La Voie* insisted that the authentic leadership of the movement was neither a party nor a few individuals, but the thousands of participants in rank and file and action committees.

At the same time the authors of this pamphlet reject the argument of those, like Cohn-Bendit, who believed the movement could survive without building some sort of permanent organization. The mechanical imposition of Leninist forms is, of course, rejected, in line with the demands of the movement itself, but *La Voie* rightly points out that the tasks of agitation and propaganda in times of social peace like that of defeating reformist working class organizations in revolutionary times, require organizations, continuous mobilization and national coordination unmastered by purely spontaneous movements.

Here *La Voie* addresses a debate which continued after May, a debate on the status of the spontaneous participatory democratic organizations produced by the movement. Some believed they could be viable substitutes for the Leninist revolutionary party. But *La Voie* tries to show that the question is badly posed. Action committees and rank and file committees are not normal political organizations, designed to carry on a long term struggle, to popularize an ideology through propaganda work, to educate, train and implant cadre. They are the forms in which the people themselves mobilize for revolutionary action in a crisis.

The problem is thus not to decide whether action committees are "better" than parties. The problem is to decide what functions besides those fulfilled by action committees are essential and to provide for their fulfillment through other organizational forms.

La Voie suggests the unification in a democratic mass party of the vanguard

which organized itself during the Events in the action and factory committees. It argues for a strategy of transitional demands, leading to the implantation of this party in the working class, to be followed when new working class offensives occur, by an active strike culminating in the establishment of workers' councils and the overthrow of capitalism.

All this may be criticized as a mechanical projection of the May Events into the future. No doubt it is a projection, but it is far less mechanical to make such projections on the basis of real history than on that of an abstract doctrine. But the strategy of *La Voie* was evidently not successful. No new party of the type it called for emerged. Instead various Trotskyist and Maoist organizations profited from the Events with recruits and prestige.

Was the error one of principle, or were conditions simply unfavorable for success? It is impossible to be sure of the answer. Perhaps had the Communist Party split down the middle during May, so that a larger and better structured working class base could have taken in hand the implementation of a strategy such as this, it would have succeeded. In any case, repression of left activists in the factories by the Communist Party would then have been more difficult, and this was certainly a major factor in the failure of the movement to survive the Events.

The only evidence for this hypothesis is the rather negative results of the struggle of *// Manifesto* in Italy. This split-off from the Italian Communist Party was, of course, rather small, and the strike movement in Italy less concentrated than that in France. But *// Manifesto* did attempt to unify the various left-wing groups in an alternative to the Communist Party. At the National Workers Conference in Milan on January 20, 1971, they argued for a strategy similar to that of *La Voie* in the following terms.

“We do not believe... that the construction of a new revolutionary party is incompatible with the direct stimulation of autonomous mass struggles, nor that today we should concentrate on the first of these tasks to become capable of attacking the second... It is only if we can give the working class the concrete hope of a political construction, capable by its size and its nature of coordinating and directing the struggle at the general political level, that it will pursue its offensive in the factories in spite of the risks and the sacrifices accompanying this offensive.”

The attempt at unification was a failure, in large part because many leftists were opposed to party organization in principle or more concerned with possible co-optation by the Communist Party through the mediation of *Il Manifesto* than with disunity. The pay-off came later, when the Italian extra-parliamentary Left collapsed along with the spontaneous struggles which had brought it into being.

The problem remains posed in the wake of the many subsequent movements both in the advanced capitalist and in the Arab world. Spontaneous struggles, however large and successful, seem condemned to disappear without a trace. *La Voie's* response may someday be successfully implemented in a future wave of radicalization, when all the participants are more conscious of the need for unity and the immense cost of the spontaneous de-mobilization which invariably follows the end of mass movements.

The pamphlet has been slightly abridged by the omission of a discussion of the positions of various French political groups in the Events.

[Document]

BOURGEOIS ELECTIONS OR REVOLUTIONARY ACTION?

by *La Voie*

The student revolt and the working class mobilization at first surprised some and disconcerted others. But today they frighten: first, the increasingly worried bourgeoisie which killed, murdered. And neither the threat of civil war nor legislative elections will hide its responsibility. Second, they frighten politicians and leaders of the "French Left". "Enough of violence!" they cry. "Democracy requires that the electoral campaign take place normally."

The bourgeoisie has made its choice. So has the traditional "Left". As for those whose sphere of action is in the extra-parliamentary realm, they continue the fight. The revolutionary militants- whether they be workers, teachers or students - will contribute to the development of neighborhood, school and company action committees, and will seek to confront the union and political leaders with their responsibilities.

A political theory must take shape. This text attempts to join the on-going discussion in order to put forward a revolutionary perspective.

A Powerful, Spontaneous Movement

After the first barricades of Friday, May 3, sleeping France shrugged its shoulders with contempt. A "handful of enragés" deserved no more. But the confrontations became more violent, more numerous. Monday, May 6, more than 10,000 demonstrators joined the rebels. The next day there were 30, 000. And the night of the barricades - from the 10 to the 11 May - was a thunder bolt. France still did not understand, but it was worried: the bourgeoisie had sent its

police against its own sons. As for the workers, they were ready to throw themselves into the fight. More than two weeks of strikes, millions of strikers, thousands of occupied factories: an open struggle began, revealing the depth of discontent.

For more than two years, the "Left" had been showing the reality of this discontent by street demonstrations and by its increased vote in the elections. But never was the mobilization so powerful, never the political awakening so strong. It was not through any organization or union that the student revolt expressed itself. All the student political groups were suddenly placed before the *fait accompli*. The student milieu suddenly exploded. And in just a few days of resisting the police, the rebels discovered by immediate experience, by concrete action, the power of a mass movement, unstructured though it was.

The young workers - unionized or not - showed the same determination. The great demonstrations of these last two years (May 17, 1966, February 1, 1967, May 17, 1967..), the great strikes of February-March 1967 could not prevent the government from assuming full powers. The procrastination of the unions' leaders after the Fall of 1967 could no longer satisfy the rank and file. For over two years sectorial struggles, leading to partial demands, had been revealing the limits of the policies of the leadership. This called for a reaction. May 13th was it. The strike was political, even though the leadership tried to limit it to a protest against the repression, because it was by the millions that the demonstrators accused the powers that be and called the government into question. In several days, the division fell, sectorial demands were put aside. The straight jacket in which the protest movements had been contained burst open. The political dimension, which every struggle for union demands possesses, appeared in the light of day. Numerous young people went beyond the union directives' and wrestled directly with all their problems. The strike took shape in many small

companies.

Millions of strikers threw themselves into the battle, even though strategic perspectives were unclear. This was because they had all understood that to obtain satisfaction (at the level of specific demands), only a struggle at the work place would lead to victory, just as the mobilization of the students had made the government retreat.

In spite of the pressures of the leadership, the workers spontaneously learned the lessons of the first student battles. The commitment which they had made - hazy as it was concerning concrete results - led them into the fight. And it was by this struggle that class consciousness advanced and will advance still further.

The violence of the bourgeoisie called forth the violence of the masses. The students and workers responded to each false maneuver of the bourgeoisie; whether it was after the first arrests of students, after the police repression of the Latin Quarter demonstrators, or after the murders committed by the bourgeoisie. This is indeed the best school of all.

If the confrontation with the police remained disorganized, following no clear directives, passing over to scattered fights, without tactical preparation, the courage of the demonstrators, the determination of the combatants mitigated the insufficiencies. There were never any urban guerilla commandos, there were never any clear directives during the street fights: this the bourgeoisie will never be able to understand. It is obliged to see a small number of chiefs behind each group of fighters, denying these latter all initiative, as if not a single rebel would have been able to determine the attitude to follow without a central command. The response to police brutality was organized in the course of the street fighting. Molotov cocktails thrown from the roofs testify to this.

In driving the government into a corner, the strikers revealed to all the true nature of the strike and its real ability to resist. In occupying the factories, they

broke with the traditional tactical schemas persistently advocated by the leadership. Management's power was challenged because the strikers actually blocked the whole productive apparatus. Managerial structures in the factories, bourgeois legitimacy were shaken because a working class presence on the workplace is a real challenge.

In organizing the strike and strike support, thousands of people learned to work together, discovered and appreciated solidarity, collective struggle. In one month, thousands and thousands of different experiences were lived, penetrating the most closed of family milieus, revealing the opportunism of some, the good qualities of others. It is the living struggle which forges class consciousness.

The statisticians of IFOP (The French equivalent of the Gallup Poll) can devise new opinion polls, can try again to measure the degree of discontent and combatively. But they can never sum up the awakening of consciousness in a few numerical givers: they can never put the revolutionary process in an equation. The class struggle cannot be planned, programmed. It remains alive, complex, contradictory. Spontaneity should not be broken because through it mass movements affirm themselves and develop.

Séguy felt obliged to say that "Nothing spontaneous happened: sooner or later the explosion of a long accumulated discontent reflecting legitimate aspirations too systematically scoffed at by a rapacious management and a reactionary government had necessarily to occur". Social degradation is the background of the crisis which just took place. No one can deny it. But to stay at that level is voluntarily to leave aside the hesitations of the organizations and to ignore all the reactions against their leaders. And to do so in the hope of self-justification, of setting aside the determination of the workers, like those of d'Hispano-Suiza, Renault or Sud-Aviation for example, who continued the strike after the conclusion of the Grenelle Protocol.

A Still Contradictory Awakening of Consciousness

The political awakening was sudden. The whole system of information, of education was challenged. Bourgeois thought, bourgeois culture were ridiculed. Taboos, restrictions fell. But political thought, in spite of a multitude of extremely rich experiences, showed itself to be very disparate and very contradictory. The most fuzzy and erroneous theories sprouted and spread rapidly.

For some, we were and we are still in a period of "dual power". Understand by that that the masses said no to the bourgeois system and that this refusal gave birth to a current which will lead the workers to power. The revolution is on the move. Students (by student power), workers (by workers' power), peasants (by peasant power) will soon manage their own affairs and the bourgeoisie will have to shut up and leave. In one word, socialism is around the corner.

Unfortunately this verbiage conjures away all the basic problems and will lead to numerous disillusionments and serious failures.

In the first place, dual power develops very exceptionally, during very short periods in the course of which the central power, the power of the bourgeoisie, is torn apart and destroyed by the exploited, organized from the bottom up and led by revolutionary militants. This assumes a simultaneous mobilization of all wage earners on a factory and neighborhood basis; a general and violent struggle against the bourgeois system, that is to say, against its administration, its police, against all its defenders; a revolutionary leadership accepted by the masses and rejecting all conciliatory perspectives.

But, even though the organization of the workers at the grass roots did develop, it never displaced all the reformist organizations of the Left. During the occupations, few strike pickets allowed the ununionized to join this organizational embryo. This means that in spite of a deep challenge to the policy of the

parliamentary Left, the move beyond its leadership remained localized, the strike was only very rarely an active strike, including all the strikers in the action.

What is more, the confrontation with State power was never generalized, global. Of course, there was the attack on the Paris Stock Exchange, the attack on numerous police stations and prefectures in Paris and the provinces. These facts prove the combativity of the demonstrators, their will to transcend the framework of the factory in order to attack the national leaders, in order to force the bourgeoisie into a corner again. But they clearly concretize the level attained by the struggle. The confrontation remained partial, little structured, little elaborated. The demonstrators never had the advantage in street fights, an essential condition, however, if one wants to smash the oppressive state. The bourgeoisie was not defeated.

Finally, the movement, never having succeeded in separating itself completely from parliamentary and reformist organizations, never had a revolutionary leadership. No plan of struggle, no concrete strategic perspective was proposed and realized. It will take many a struggle, many a unification to bring forth a structured movement with a revolutionary political program understood and put into practice by the working masses.

No, there was never any collapse of the State apparatus; there was never any dual power. Because, in no case were the workers within an inch of taking in hand the productive apparatus.

In certain places, it is said, workers' management was achieved. It is true that at Brest, in particular, the workers sought to start up production again for the strikers. Thus, there was indeed embryonic control - locally. And these concrete experiences are, again, a very good school. It is thus that the internal organization of the company can be overthrown. No more informers, no more wage earners in the service of the bosses, no more executives exercising simultaneously a technical

and a police role. Everyone comes out in the open and chooses his camp.

But the limits appear immediately. Who controls investments? Who directs all that occurs beyond the immediate sphere of production? (That is to say, hiring, research, the perfecting of manufacturing, supplying of raw materials, of semi-manufactured products, of finished products), Who controls the disposal and distribution of finished products?

These experiments will fall short so long as they remain localized in a few marginal enterprises, that is to say, in those the production of which is in no way decisive for the global operation of industry. And in no case can they signify that the workers have put production on the path leading to socialism. These remarks are not intended to minimize what has been tried. Because, this is in fact the only concrete path by which one can learn lessons and teachings of great importance. But, on the contrary, it is a question of evaluating the situation in its real proportions.

Class consciousness asserted itself, concretized itself through the experiences and battles which we have just mentioned. But this is only a beginning, a first trial. The confrontation with the government, a confrontation that we all desire, will only occur when this awakening of consciousness leads to revolutionary perspectives and organization. And this will demand a long political preparation, tied to the daily struggle.

Class struggle showed its force, revealed the power of the working masses despite the straight jacket imposed on them by reformist leaders, shook all pre-established schemas. Even if the ebbing of the tide restores the habitual appearance of the social climate, May 1968 will remain for millions of workers an unprecedented experience, worthy of the greatest historical examples.

The Action Committees in a Difficult Position

Born in the struggle, they have lived all the events. In them conscious militants gather, but also many young people, throwing themselves into a political battle for the first time.

So long as it was obvious what to do (confrontation with the police, denunciation of the "Left" organizations. . .) action could be improvised from day to day and achieve some results. Spontaneity reigned and it expressed itself according to the will of events.

Some attempted to leave the campus ghetto. The action committees, created in the neighborhoods, developed rapidly in the Paris region, all the more because of the great receptivity of the population. The nature of the regime had never been so clear, the policy of the Left so obvious.

But there is more than one shadow on this scene. Intrigues, designed to co-opt the movement, were numerous, complicating to perfection an already confused situation. As if it sufficed to present oneself as a leader to be applauded and elected to the leadership positions of an unstructured movement.

Political debates, in the framework of the many proposed co-ordinations, were more than insufficient, not to say non-existent. And here we are, with the elections several days away, without being guided by a political platform.

The action committees were never the organs of a counter-government. Although they organized strike solidarity (fund raising, distribution of food. . .) they were never able to dislocate the bourgeois apparatus, to attack all its mechanisms and representatives. There again, we are faced with a first step in organizing, which must be evaluated as such.

The early enthusiasm will soon collapse. The members of the action committees are going to diminish rapidly. Disagreements will multiply. This indicates the importance of the problems which remain unsolved.

However, it is in these committees that a first unification was effectuated. The task now is to preserve the essential, while getting rid of the folklore of the movement.

The Tasks of the Action Committees

Experience has shown that they are essentially three in number.

1. Political theorizing. The day by day struggle, the enthusiasm of the first fights hid a very big political void. And now that order has returned, the gaps appear clearly. It is necessary to learn the lessons of the main events of the month of May: police intervention against students and strikers, the crisis of the university, the social crisis, workers' demands, the first steps toward grass roots organization, the attitude of the union and political leaders, the reactions of the population, the grip of electoralist conceptions, the arguments for a people's government, the necessity of violence...Then it will be possible to go further and to define an extra-parliamentary strategy.

2. Propaganda. Agitation. Carrying all debates into the streets is a possible and a fruitful experiment. Many committees have already done it on numerous occasions. Militants should stimulate agitational work in relation to a precise event (speeches of General de Gaulle, the murder of workers at Sochaux, unsatisfied union demands, the position of an electoral candidate...) And this is the best school of all, on the condition that its lessons are constantly learned.

3. Linking up with the factories. It is necessary to pursue and to systematize what has already been achieved during the hottest moments, by informing the

wage earners of what has been done in other companies, in other neighborhoods, by proposing themes for action in relation to unemployment, professional education, by explaining the meaning of extra-parliamentarism

Toward a Political Platform

Two weeks of strike sufficed for the bourgeoisie to organize an efficient repression. The party of order gave full powers to the prefects. The main revolutionary groups are outlawed. And if the situation calls for it, tomorrow a dictatorship will be established. The bourgeoisie will not yield before the mass mobilization. This is why the theory of peaceful passage to socialism is in fact only a veil, hiding the complicity and treason of those who pretend to be communists.

But the basic problem is clear:

- either a confrontation with the State apparatus is prepared and sought, which requires a massive mobilization, organizing the workers at all levels and rejecting all conciliation;

- or, profiting from a major social crisis, the Left politicians avoid confrontation and place themselves in the service of an important fraction of the bourgeoisie. These leaders had already chosen this second possibility. Their capitulation in the month of June confirms it again.

The axis of revolutionary strategy rests on the first possibility. And it is this orientation which we must concretize in a political platform.

1. Parliament remains the locus of permanent conciliation. It leads inevitably to the worst political deals, made by specialists, abusing the good faith of their electors. This system must be smashed by bringing out latent anti-parliamentarism. All electoral approaches must be smashed. The Guy Mollets, Pompidous, Mitterrands, Duhamels, W. Rochets, Lecanuets can play their subtle game. But that is not important. It is easy to ridicule these men. But this leaves

the real problems aside, that is to say, the content of the policies they defend and the use they make of the mandate given them, a use made at the expense of the electors.

Revolutionary politics cannot be a backroom affair, cannot involve itself in deals. And the militants who apply it must be controllable, recallable from within structures that are not integrated to the bourgeois system.

2. Extra-parliamentarism is not a slogan which electoral candidates can take up for their own purposes. A choice must be made: either the maintenance and the reinforcement of a political parliamentary "elite", or the creation of grass roots committees capable of stimulating struggles in the factories, on the campuses, a struggle begun in May, 1968 and which will lead to street fighting, to confrontation at all levels with the representatives of the bourgeoisie. The thousands of strikers who cried "power is in the street, in the factory", now need a concrete action program, enabling them to pursue mass struggle, to burst the bourgeois structure wherever workers can get organized.

This path demands a program of union demands leading to an active politicization, and based on the following themes.

- Inflation Adjusted Wage Scales: in order to protect raises from being rapidly nibbled away, rising prices should be immediately and continuously compensated by rising wages.

- Struggle Against the Hierarchy of Salaries: the gamut of financial resources, of salaries should be reduced to the benefit of the most disadvantaged. The same raise for all, or the 100,000 Franc minimum wage³² concretize this demand.

- Struggle Against Divisions Between Wage Earners: the forms of salaries are a first divisive element (opposition between hourly and monthly). Thus, to demand monthly wages for all is simultaneously to knock

down several barriers which are still solidly in place and this makes it possible to simplify all forms of pay. Bonuses, various and preferential advantages are then to be integrated into the monthly wage.

- Struggle Against Unemployment: unemployment will not disappear without the elimination of exploitation. This does not prevent us from fighting for the maintenance of industrial jobs, or for obtaining

- The Immediate 40 Hour Week.

- Retirement at 60: which would proportionally decrease unemployment.

Moreover, this does not prevent us from demanding that when workers are forced to change jobs, their qualifications not be lowered and that they find an at least equivalent post. Because, what is at stake is not only having work (the right to work) but also the possession of technical and general knowledge sufficient to one day take over the system. Thus wage earners, today must refuse unfavorable reclassifications.

None of these demands were satisfied in the course of the last period. Because, given the size of the movement, given their interlocking nature, the government could not absorb them. It was here that the government was challenged and will be again. Very quickly dissatisfaction at the level of union demands led wage earners to formulate a global challenge: "No to the Fouchet Plan, no to the Gaullist Fifth Plan, down with the social security ordinances, down with full powers. And if the government does not yield, and if we want satisfaction, we must therefore take the necessary measures to get our demands through, we must therefore take power. "

3. Workers' control of the main industrial sectors and the bourgeois apparatus is thus on the agenda. Isolated experiments have led to partial self-management. But in order to extend these experiments, several conditions must be met:

- the bourgeois apparatus is dismantled. Then it is possible to annihilate the repressive forces, to control all the financial circuits, to plan the economy, fixing priorities, foreseeing needs on a long term basis both at the level of research, of teaching and at the level of the organization of labor. This means that the working masses, organized from the bottom up, have confronted bourgeois power.

- the struggle against the State apparatus is completed by a struggle in the framework of the company. Management's structure of control and command must be destroyed. Informers, company cops, bosses will be chased away. Subordinates of management's orders such as foreman and engineers must resign or be neutralized. Political militants, also competent at the technical level, must take the productive apparatus in hand and do so with the active concourse of workers councils. If technical competences are lacking, those who have them must be subordinated to the workers' representatives.

Then production can start up again on a new basis because the internal structure of the company will be controlled by the workers, the technical organization of work will be reconceptualized in order to develop team work, to improve work conditions as well as safety. Basic production, up and downstream from the company, will be governed by planning, which implies that investments be controlled by workers' representatives, that the commercial market (in particular with foreign countries) be under the control of the proletarian State.

The difficulties are great, the dangers many. In the first place, the workers will be confronted with a multitude of problems: sabotage, deterioration, lack of technical capacities in certain areas. On the other hand, careerists will be numerous and will seek to place themselves well. Bureaucracy may develop. This means that from the beginning it will be necessary to create a permanent means of removing ambitious leaders, who attempt to safeguard their personal interests.

The perspective of workers' control determines the content of demands in the educational realm. The educated work force of the present must place itself in the service of capital. If we want the workers to be able to take over production, we must impose a solid general education, excluding mutilating specialization. But this is contrary to the goals pursued by the government and the present faculty. There too the destruction of present structures is needed.

4. Mass organizing is basic. If councils continue to be the goal, various steps must be distinguished:

-Revolutionary militants must get organized. This should be understood to mean that those who led struggles in the factories, both against the bosses and against the union leadership, must prepare evaluational meetings economic sector by sector. These meetings should take place initially at the level of the factory, by the holding of a general assembly of union members, open to the non-unionized, because the floor should be given to all those who sought to unite with the students, whatever the dictates of the leaderships, that is, all who saw the leaders' attempts to co-optation, who said no to sectorial negotiations and finally, to those who tore up their union card.

Then sectorial conferences gather in which would consider the struggle against the management hierarchy, the economic perspectives of the sector, its purpose within the economy as a whole, the necessary conditions of control over all the activities of the branch.

-The coordination of struggles is not a mere technical problem. It presupposes a global view on all fundamental questions: destruction of the bourgeois apparatus, elimination of reformist conceptions, political expression of the rank and file workers, the attitude toward the middle strata. This implies the intervention of a revolutionary party. But, this party does not exist. It will be born in the course of future struggles. But starting today the construction of this party

must be considered, avoiding the present caricatures propagated by numerous political groups.

5. The action committees must act today in the light of this goal. They must bring the debates out into the open with sustained propaganda and agitation:

- demystifying electoralism, engaging Left candidates in polemics, frontally attacking all conceptions which justify parliamentary action (that is to say, by holding public discussions, led by militants, contestation in the meetings of the Communist Party and of the P.S.U., sending open letters to candidates, holding meeting-debates with the action committees. . . ;

- giving a precise definition to the ideological and organizational achievements of the crisis. Direct action and mass organization proved their efficacy;

- considering the economic and political future of France and Europe (rising prices, unemployment, local disparities. . . ;

- struggling against all co-optative attempts by the "Left" political machines;

- struggling against the bourgeois offensive, which seeks to integrate what suits it perfectly (paritary commissions in the schools, the autonomy of the universities. . . ;

- showing solidarity in all its forms to the organizations disbanded by the government;

- developing a program of union demands, designed to force the government into a corner;

- showing the necessary steps to the attainment of total control over production.

Then it will be necessary to coordinate various initiatives by proposing campaign themes, in order to provide a precise framework for propaganda, in

order to deal with the present decline of the movement (example: action relating to the unemployed, who remain unorganized).

The decline has begun. "All returns to order", it is said. The proof? "Gangsters" have returned to work again and have already robbed several banks. The bourgeois order again takes on its daily aspect. Habits return. The electoral campaign is at its peak. Capital has its logic.

But the class struggle has its logic too. Nothing will stop it. New strikes, new explosions will take place, whether it be in France or in the other European countries. Because European society is sick. Already the student revolt surprised Italy, Germany. The Belgian bourgeoisie remains still very divided, unable as it is to resolve regional problems. Wilson is contested more each day. Spain had to devaluate its currency. The recession is there. All this because the "golden age" of European capitalism is over. If from about 1950 to 1963, it was able to win new markets, to consolidate its political and administrative structures, for several years now things have not been the same. Competition between the USA and the European countries, as between these latter, has intensified: the revolution is going well in Vietnam, it takes shape in Latin America. Tomorrow all capitalists will have to confront an explosive situation. Europe will be harshly confronted.

Millions of workers will say no! Thousands and thousands of revolutionaries, becoming each day more numerous, more committed, more combative, more organized. Violence, prohibitions will multiply to meet them. But it makes no difference!

Solidarity will develop. Class consciousness will become stronger. The workers' organization will take shape. Internationalism will triumph.

Toward a Revolutionary Movement?

After the May days, political life can never return to its normal course, its daily

rhythm. The elections, no doubt, mark a temporary withdrawal of revolutionary possibilities; they open a period in which grocers, professors and officers will again believe in the eternity of their France. But everyone knows, in his heart of hearts, that the contradictions are insurmountable and that the movement will start up again. And the methods employed in the course of the most combative days, street fighting, barricades, occupations of work places, etc. , will be taken up again, developed, improved by the workers and students as soon as they find an occasion for entering massively into action: these fighting methods are now part of the tradition of the French workers' movement.

Such certitude must not be accompanied by an unconditional optimism: the movement will surely be reborn, but just as surely, it will be beaten by the bourgeoisie, which has already learned the lessons of the explosion of May '68, if it does not find the means to organize itself, to give itself a political direction. It has been shown that revolutionary situations can exist in capitalist societies that modern theoreticians described as unchangeable. The breadth and vigor of the initiative of the masses was reaffirmed for those who had forgotten it. Revolutionaries must register these positive facts and remember them when the ebbing of the tide demoralizes some. But it is not their role to go into ecstasies; their role is to detect the weaknesses of a movement in order to correct them. But, the weakness of the May movement in the early days was the other side of its strength: spontaneity became improvisation and, from day to day, one saw the serious consequences of demonstrations without objectives, scattered barricades, isolated confrontations. Yes, tomorrow again power will be in the street; but it will not victoriously remain there unless the vanguard which led it there is unified and assembled.

This conclusion is all the more obvious as the days of May '68 marked the failure or the limits of the existing organizations. A distinct failure of the P.C.F. and

the C.G.T., the consequences of which will make themselves felt in the long run. Limits of all the groups and movements of the extreme Left which, even when they were present at all stages of the struggle - which was the case with several of them - could not play the role of organizing centre of the movement. Throughout the days of demonstrations the students and young workers manifested an extreme distrust with regard to everything that could appear traditional from a concern for democracy pushed to the extreme. One can suggest many different explanations for this state of mind, which was accompanied by a flourishing of black flags in demonstrations. One can evoke the youth of the majority of demonstrations, their justified hostility toward the faults of preceding generations; one can refer to the deep scars left by 40 years of Stalinism. This is not what is important. The essential thing is to observe that a vanguard emerged, that it is not and will not be unified by any existing organization, that it still distrusts all excessively centralistic formulae.

This is why it would be useless to seek to respond to the need for organization revealed by the May days by a mere reaffirmation of the necessity of a revolutionary party. Of this necessity we are convinced. But a party is not only a perfectly elaborated program, nor a massively widespread press and agitational means; it is the assembling of a sufficient number of militants implanted in the essential sectors of the workers' movement. Such a result cannot be achieved in several weeks, starting out from nothing or very little. But today, even if they assembled all their contacts, the groups of the extreme Left are near zero so far as their implantation in the working class is concerned. It is necessary therefore to maintain the long term perspective of a revolutionary workers' party, but to refuse, in the very interest of this perspective, to play at being a party, brandishing emblems, juggling with a skeletal organization. The only result would be to discredit the very notion of a party for years to come. The task today is to consider

the concrete steps corresponding to the present state of the movement by which to accomplish the unification of the vanguard and its linking up with the workers.

The first step should be the constitution of a movement, sufficiently broad in its organizational forms so that all the militants, all the groups which fought in the street can join together in it. This movement would be the acquisition of the struggle of May, the organizational outcome of the struggle of the students and workers. It is in this framework that the conclusions of the weeks of strikes and demonstrations could be drawn, in which the debates and confrontations over the program and methods of struggle to come could take place.

Such an attempt is obviously not without its dangers. Behind the project of a "movement" very different ideas may confront each other: those of partisans of a mere front for the existing groups, without a real common organization; those of amateur machine politicians, associated usually with the P.C. F. criticizing its policies but without abandoning its organizational conceptions, and imagining that an emblem, a centre and several hundred members can be the origin of a rapid recruitment of millions of militants. Very negative tendencies may develop in the confusion which threatens to emerge from any lack of precision on these questions. Amateurs of personal public relations, for whom politics is a replay of the parimutual, which consists in placing in disorderly fashion Ho Chi Minh, Fidel Castro and Che Guëvara in para-electoral speeches, can use a movement the political bases of which are imprecise. "Intelligent observers", numerous in the university, who have not taken part in the struggle, can find the palliative for their insolvency in action, in membership in an unformed group.

Some points must therefore be clarified without ambiguity.

1. To achieve maximum efficacy, the unification of the revolutionaries who appeared in the struggle of May should have been organized during the days when the strikes and the demonstrations reached their peak (from about May 13

to 20). Then it was possible to reach agreement on immediate tasks, the accomplishment of which would have accelerated numerous militants' break with traditional organizations. This was made impossible by the procrastination, the maneuvers, the bureaucratic manipulations of some of those who had been put in "leadership" positions by the first days of struggle. An opportunity was missed. It is not too late to work on the formation of a movement. But everyone must understand that, for some time to come, events will not facilitate our task. The stimulant which, momentarily, is no longer provided by extra-parliamentary struggle must be replaced by a greater political precision.

2. A revolutionary movement must assemble the largest possible number of students and workers who fought on the barricades. In the immediate future, in spite of their weaknesses, in spite of their uncertain future, the action committees are the place in which the lessons of recent experiences can be collectively learned. A revolutionary movement worthy of the name should be the expression of these action committees. It should give itself no organizational structure - in any case more apparent than real - which would make it appear as a rival of the action committees, so long as these latter pursue their political experiment.

3. The assembling of the vanguard of students, of young people who made the greatness of May '68 is an indispensable step. But the revolutionary movement will not progress in a significant way until it will have assembled a sufficient number of worker militants. Interesting experiments have already been made in Paris and the provinces with various worker-student liaison committees. They should be pursued and enlarged - as much as possible. But it should be noted that these are generally workers without great responsibilities in the union movement, workers from secondary companies who joined the student movement. The phenomenon is perfectly normal and the value of the work which can be pursued starting out from the nuclei formed in the struggle is not lessened

for that matter. But a major goal remains: to win militants who, in the CGT and also often in the CFDT, constitute the real cadres of the workers' movement in the enterprise - the delegates, the rank and file leaders. May '68 created a new given in this area: contestation of the policies of the union leaderships occurred widely in the working class itself. The CGT and sections of the PCF are shaken by discussions, which sometimes become violent. In any case, these discussions will not lead immediately to massive organizational splits. It will take a rather long process for factory militants to lose all faith in the organization which serves as a framework for their struggle. Inscribed as the first point in a revolutionary movement's work plan should be the task of organizing this split. This implies propaganda, liaison and action around a program of struggle such as the one we sketched above in its essential lines.

In such conditions, the revolutionary unification which remains on the agenda must dedicate itself at first:

- to propaganda campaigns, by means of posters, leaflets, public meetings. Denunciation of electoral perspectives, of the illusions about the peaceful way; the development of internationalist themes (anti-imperialist struggles, coordination of struggles on the European scale, and the struggle against repression); the explanation of the necessity for a revolutionary organization, different from the existing parties: such can be the themes of these campaigns;

- to political discussions of the widest and most public sort, on the strategy which revolutionaries should adopt to approach the next stages of the struggle.

It becomes obvious, from this point of view, that the essential instrument of struggle must be a mass newspaper. This newspaper, the publication of which should be preceded by the adoption of a political platform common to all the participants, would be simultaneously the forum for free discussion by committees

and worker militants, the organizer of propaganda campaigns and the place for a permanent confrontation on all the problems posed by the future of the struggle. Thus conceived, it would attain a distribution which would go far beyond the present limits of the recruitment of a revolutionary movement. But at the same time, by proposing themes for action as well as political perspectives, it would be an organizational instrument, preparing future steps in the revolutionary unification.

These proposals may seem very minimal after the exciting struggles of the month of May. They are, however, the ones which correspond with the present balance of forces between the bourgeoisie and the bureaucratic machines on the one hand, and on the other, the vanguard militants. The repressions, the disillusionments consequent on failures, the confusion born of badly led attempts will make the task of revolutionaries difficult for some time to come. This is a supplementary reason to persist in struggle for these objectives, which constitute the starting point for assembling the vanguard in view of preparing new May '68s.

We have entered a new period of the general crisis of capitalism. The breadth of mass struggles will surprise those who believe comfortably in the eternity of the economic "miracles" of the bourgeoisie, and those who piously live on the memories of October '17, which they have confined to their desk drawers.

It falls on all of us, on all those who found the path of struggle in the street, to prepare for tomorrow the revolutionary organization which will learn the lessons from recent struggles and prepare new fights.

And tomorrow, the revolution will come!

Paris, June 17, 1968.

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¹ The following text, adapted from a talk given at the École normale supérieure de Lyon, presents the May Events Archive created by the author at the library of Simon Fraser University (<http://edocs.lib.sfu.ca/projects/mai68/>). The archive contains scans of hundreds of May '68 items organised according to five categories: booklets, leaflets, magazines, newspapers, and translations. Various booklets offer a cross-section of reflections on the May '68 events from many perspectives. Several items attempt to explain the unprecedented involvement of the employed middle strata in the May '68 events, notably researchers, government bureaucrats, film makers, and architects. Others represent attempts by student and worker activists to present the idea of self-managing socialism which inspired much of the movement. *Les Cahiers de Mai* reports on struggles by the students themselves and offers direct testimony on movement activities. The reports on the union takeover of the town of Nantes are particularly interesting. This was the highpoint of the movement, its closest approximation to the goal of self-management. Other items in this section give insight into the reaction of the unions, the Communist Party, and various political sects. The leaflets track the unfolding of the movement. Most are by the various student organizations directly involved in the May '68 events. Action was the principal student newspaper published during the May '68 events. Other movement publications represented in the archive, such as the Maoist newspapers *La Cause du Peuple* and *Servir le Peuple*, were far less influential. *L'Enragé*, named after a radical faction in the French Revolution of 1789, contains cartoons that spoofed and ridiculed the government and its supporters. The archive also contains translations of a number of the texts.

² <http://edocs.lib.sfu.ca/projects/mai68/>

³ This formulation comes from their book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.

⁴ Almost all the quoted passages included in this chapter are translations from scans available at the May Events Archive, see endnote 1. In the notes I will provide the original French that has been translated in the text.

"Refusons categoriquement l'idéologie du rendement et du progrès ou des pseudo-forces du même nom. Le progrès sera ce que nous voudrons qu'il soit. Refusons l'engrenage du luxe et du 'nécessaire'—stéréotypés—et imposés tous deux séparément pour être bien sûr qu'aucun travailleur ne se rendra compte qu'il se fait travailleur lui-même—le tout au nom des lois naturelles de l'économie." (<http://edocs.lib.sfu.ca/cgi-bin/Mai68?Display=1053>, pp.11-12)

"TRAVAILLEURS de toutes natures, ne nous laissons pas duper. Ne conformons pas la division technique du travail et la division hiérarchisée des autorités et des pouvoirs. La première est nécessaire, la seconde est superflue et doit être remplacée par un échange égalitaire de nos forces de travail et nos services au sein d'une société libérée." (<http://edocs.lib.sfu.ca/cgi-bin/Mai68?Display=1053> p.13).

⁵ "Votre lutte et notre lutte sont convergentes. Il faut détruire tout ce qui isole les uns des autres (l'habitude, les journaux, etc.). Il faut faire la jonction entre les entreprises et

les facultés occupées.” (<http://edocs.lib.sfu.ca/cgi-bin/Mai68?Display=247>).

⁶ "Nous refusons d'être des érudits coupés de la réalité sociale. Nous refusons d'être utilisés au profit de la classe dirigeante. Nous voulons supprimer la séparation entre travail d'exécution et travail de réflexion et d'organisation. Nous voulons construire une société sans classes..." (<http://edocs.lib.sfu.ca/cgi-bin/Mai68?Display=247>).

⁷ "Les étudiants, les lycéens, les jeunes chômeurs, les professeurs et les travailleurs n'ont pas lutté au coude à coude derrière les barricades vendredi dernier pour sauver une université au service des seuls intérêts de la bourgeoisie: C'est une génération entière de futures cadres qui se refusent à être les planificateurs des besoins de la bourgeoisie et les agents de l'exploitation et de la répression des travailleurs." (<http://edocs.lib.sfu.ca/cgi-bin/Mai68?Display=184>).

⁸ "En mêmes temps que les étudiants soulevés dans toutes les universités de France et les dix millions de gréviste unis contre l'iniquité du régime économique, le prodigieux mouvement populaire de mai 68 a touché les fonctionnaires des principaux ministères où les structures traditionnelles de l'administration sont profondément ébranlé.

"L'assemblée des personnels de l'administration centrale de l'économie et des finances réunis le 21 mai a décidé la Grève continue. Au ministère des finances comme dans la plupart des services annexes et à l'institut national de statistique les fonctionnaires ont arrêté le travail et occupé les locaux.

"Le 21 mai une manifestation réunissait rue de Rivoli 500 fonctionnaires des finances réclamant une administration au service du peuple et un 'changement radical de politique économique et sociale". (<http://edocs.lib.sfu.ca/cgi-bin/Mai68?Display=224>).

⁹ "Fonctionnaires au service de la collectivité nous sommes devenus paradoxalement et pour beaucoup à notre corps défendant, le symbole de la paperasserie. Une conception erronée du rôle de l'Administration jointe à l'absence de concertation dans l'élaboration de décisions et dans leur mise en oeuvre font qu'au lieu d'être l'élément moteur de l'Urbanisme, de l'Équipement et du Logement nous en sommes les freins que tous les usagers voudraient voir sauter." (<http://edocs.lib.sfu.ca/cgi-bin/Mai68?Display=958> p.13, top of p. 14).

¹⁰ "Les contraintes et les structures insupportable contre lesquelles les étudiants se sont élevés existent pareillement, et de façon encore plus intolérable, dans les usines, les chantiers, les bureaux....

"Le gouvernement a cédé aux étudiants. A la liberté dans les universités doit correspondre la liberté dans les entreprises. A la monarchie industrielle et administrative, il faut substituer des structures démocratiques à base d'autogestion.

"Le Moment d'Agir est Venu." (<http://edocs.lib.sfu.ca/cgi-bin/Mai68?Display=212>).

¹¹ "Camarades, l'occupation des usines doit maintenant signifier que vous êtes capables de les faire fonctionner sans l'encadrement bourgeois qui vous exploitait....Assurez la production, la distribution, pour que l'ensemble de la classe ouvrière démontre qu'un pouvoir ouvrier propriétaire de ses moyens de production peut instituer une réelle économie socialiste....Pratiquement l'autogestion consiste pour les

camarades ouvriers à faire fonctionner leurs usines PAR et POUR EUX et par conséquent à supprimer la hiérarchie des salaires ainsi que les notions de salariat et de patronat.” (<http://edocs.lib.sfu.ca/cgi-bin/Mai68?Display=1042> pp. 47-

48).

¹² "Démonstrons que la gestion ouvrière dans les entreprises, c'est le pouvoir de faire mieux pour tous ce que les capitalistes faisaient scandaleusement pour quelques uns." (<http://edocs.lib.sfu.ca/cgi-bin/Mai68?Display=1042> p. 48).

¹³ Cf. The fascicule of the Revolutionary Action Committee of the Sorbonne3 p. 52.

¹⁴ Cf. *Journal de la commune étudiante*, p. 384.

¹⁵ This complex consists of several gigantic modern buildings in the south of Paris which stand out like a sore thumb of modern urbanism in the midst of the old city.

¹⁶ Pétain was the chief military leader of France in World War I, and in his old age accepted the political leadership of defeated France in World War II. He briefly ruled a rump French republic in alliance with Germany from the town of Vichy. After the War he was condemned to life imprisonment for treason.

¹⁷ The French baccalaureate is equivalent to an American High School diploma.

¹⁸ The Chouan participated in a counter-revolutionary movement during the French Revolution of 1789. This region of France was long noted for its Catholic and reactionary politics.

¹⁹ The reference here is to the two Russian Revolutions, the smaller and inconclusive one of 1905 foreshadowing the decisive events of 1917 which led to the establishment of a communist government.

²⁰ The Commune of Paris in 1871 abolished the city government and established a new type of governing body which combined legislative and executive functions. Representatives were responsible for carrying out the measures they passed. They could be recalled at any time. This model inspired later libertarian Marxist and anarchist thinking on the "withering away of the state."

²¹ See, for example, A. Glucksmann, *Strategie et Revolution en France 1968* (Paris: Christian Bourgeois, 1968).

²² « Les étudiants, les cadres et la revolution, » published by the Comité Universitaire d'Etude et de Formation Marxiste-Leniniste.

²³ April-May 1968. (This journal no longer exists.)

²⁴ « Le parti communiste français s'adresse aux intellectuels, aux étudiants. »

²⁵ *Le capitalisme monopoliste d'état* (Paris: Editions Sociales), pp. 239-240.

²⁶ The authors belonged to the Comité Revolutionnaire d'Initiative et de Reflexion. Vidal-Naquet tells us that this group included former partisans of the "Italian" theses in the French communist youth organization, but evidently, they were no longer associated with the Communist Party in May 1968. (of. *Journal de la commune étudiante*, p. 639).

²⁷ The students accused the communists of what in English would be called "jumping on the bandwagon". The word "train" occurs in the French expression. (translator's note).

²⁸ A pleasant suburb of Paris. (Translator's note.)

²⁹ Union des Jeunesses Communistes (Marxiste-Léniniste)

³⁰ This excessively schematic argument overlooks the problem of monopolistic competition. More complex mediations are required to prove the point. (Translator's note.)

³¹ By comparison, that was my yearly income on a fellowship as a graduate student at the time. (Translator's note.)

³² Approximately \$200. (Translator's note.)