

POST-MAY PERSPECTIVES

This pamphlet is among the most intelligent and realistic attempts written during the May Events to define a long term strategy. La Voie (The Way)₃ which published it₃ was (is?) a small Trotskyist organization. However_a unlike some of the other Trotskyist groups active during May₃ it did not enter the fray by announcing that it was the vanguard of the movement. Nor did it insist on its own organizational continuity in the context of a less sectarian strategy 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 France₃ 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 is₃ then: how to pass from this basis₃ 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. 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 Events₃ La Voie insisted that the authentic leadership of the movement was neither a party nor a few individuals₃ 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 of continuous mobilization and national coordination unmastered by purely spontaneous movements.

Eere La Voie addresses a debate which has continued since 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 concept of the 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, through other organizational forms, for their fulfillment.

Le 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 project in this way on the basis of real history than on that of an abstract doctrine, let 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 Il Manifesto in Italy. This split-off from the Italian Communist Party was, of course, rather small, and the strike movement in Italy less concentrated and violent than that in France. But Il 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 of 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 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. La Voie's response remains as a possible one, one of the most convincing to come out of the radicalization of the sixties. Perhaps it will be successfully implemented in a future 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 defeat of mass movements.

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

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 bring out revolutionary perspectives.

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, little structured 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. In many small companies the strike took shape.

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. In the course of the street fights, the response to police brutality was organized: molotov cocktails thrown from the roofs testify to this.

In driving the government into a corner, the strikers revealed to all its true nature and its real ability to resist. In occupying the factories, they broke with the traditional tactical schemas kept up 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 work-place is a real challenge to them.

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 IFOF (The French equivalent of the Gallup Poll) can make 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.

Seguy had to state: "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 CONTRADICTIONARY 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 developed 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 pulled 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 set aside 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 concretize well 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 schemes. Even if the ebbing of the tide restores its habitual appearance to 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, saw then a rapid development 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. Liaison 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 efficacious 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, sought, which demands a massive mobilization, organizing the workers at all levels and the rejection of 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, using 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 the important thing is not there. 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 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 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 politization, and based on the following themes.

- Mobile Wage Scales: in order to protect raises from being rapidly nibbled away, rising prices should be immediately and constantly 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 wage (about 200 dollars) are the concretization of it.

Struggle Against Divisions Between Wage Earners: the forms of salaries are a first divisive element (opposition between hourly and monthly wages). 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 reclassifications which are unfavorable to them.

None of these demands was 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 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 that 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 in hand the productive apparatus and do so with the active concourse of workers¹ 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 reconsidered 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 get hold. 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. At first, at the level of the factory, by asking for the holding of a general assembly of unionmembers, 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, who saw the leaders¹ attempts to co-optation, who said no to sectorial negotiations and finally, to those who tore up their union card.

Then gathered in sectorial conferences 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 a 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. Today the action committees must act in the light of this goal. With sustained propaganda, agitation; they must bring the debates out into the open:

- by demystifying electoralism, by engaging Left candidates in polemic, by frontally attacking all conceptions which justify parliamentary action (that is to say, by holding public discussions, led by militants, by contestation in the meetings of the Communist Party, of the P.S.U., by sending open letters to candidates, by holding meeting-debates with the action committees. . .);
- by giving a precise definition to the ideological and organizational achievements furnished by the crisis. Direct action and mass organization proved their efficacy;
- by considering the economic and political future of France and Europe (rising prices, unemployment, local disparities. . .);
- by struggling against all co-optative attempts by the "Left" machines;
- by struggling against the bourgeois offensive, which seeks to integrate what suits it perfectly (paritary commissions in the schools, the autonomy of the universities. . .);
- by giving solidarity in all its forms to the organizations disbanded by the government;
- by developing a program of union demands, designed to force the government into a corner;
- by 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 takes on again 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 devalue 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 U.S.A. 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, will be 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 come out on top.

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; it is to detect the weaknesses of a movement in order to correct them. But, the weakness of the May movement was the other side of its strength in the early days: 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, the consequences of which will make themselves felt in the long run, of the P. C.F. and the C.G.T. 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 get 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, coming usually from 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 all 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 Guevara 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 part 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, 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, tracts, public meetings. The 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 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, those who piously live on the memories of October '17, which they have locked up in 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.