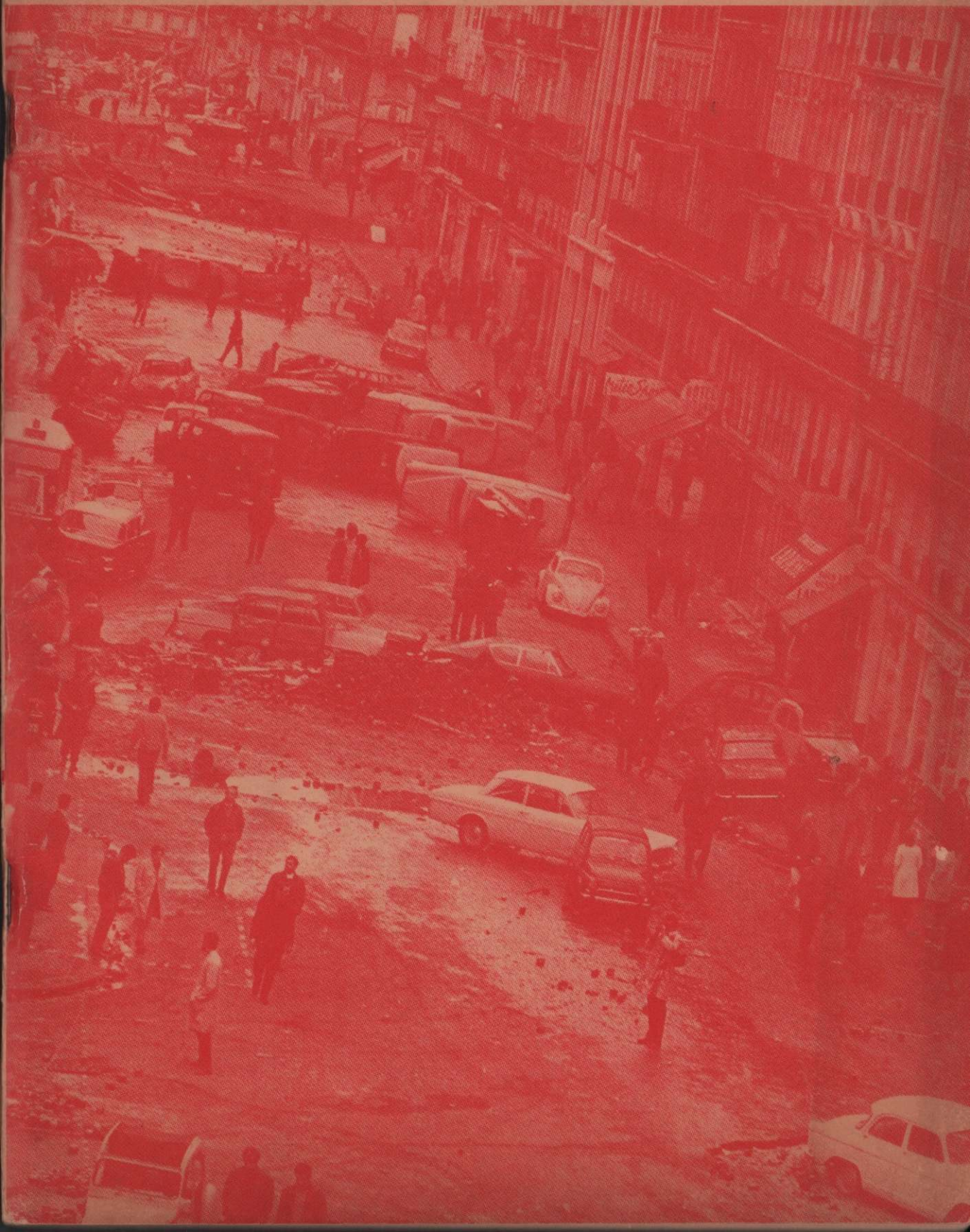


MAGAZINE OF
STUDENTS FOR
A DEMOCRATIC
SOCIETY NO.3
FALL ISSUE

CAW!

DEVOTED TO
THE BATTLE
OF FRANCE
1968

50¢





Most of the material in this issue of CAW! was brought to New York by two members of the March 22 Movement who arrived with a great interest in the new left here, and a suitcase full of French documents, posters and photographs. The material they brought reflects intimately and powerfully the struggles of the French students and workers and is important to us because of a startling similarity between the forms of their struggle against bourgeois France and ours against bourgeois America.

A note from the staff

(This anonymous article first appeared in the student political magazine, Le Point -- 26, rue del la Pepiniere, Bruxelles, I -- on May 11, the day after the "Night of the barricades" in the Latin Quarter in Paris. It was reprinted as an editorial in the May-June issue of Les Temps Modernes because the editors --including Jean-Paul Sartre and Andre Gorz -- felt it impossible to improve on it.)

VICTORY WITHIN THE VICTORY

With the German, Italian, and French student demonstrations we are witnessing the most extraordinary revolutionary political event that Western Europe has seen since the Belgian strike of 1960, the demonstrations of the Charonne Metro and that of the Algerians in Paris which was the prelude to winning independence in Algeria. Quite simply the break-up of bourgeois legal order has escalated: the bourgeoisie is put outside the law by its own sons. This time, it is a civil war which bourgeois society can see developing within itself: not a war between two nations nor between two classes-- the bourgeoisie itself is split in two, literally torn apart by the generation gap between its theory and its practice, or rather, between its ecumenical theory of the universal man with his "rights of man" and the revolutionary theory of counter-violence, of the youth unmasking and stripping bare all the diffused, secret, and above all, ideological violence behind which the bourgeoisie camouflages itself. The struggle has revealed the political purity of its meaning: a purely political and ideological strug-



gle, without any definable material root, any partial interest to defend, any particular interest to fight for. From the first, it takes on the emotional breadth and generality of reasons for living, of reasons for being a man: purely negative reasons which are nothing but the radical and total rejection of bourgeois society. That is the originality of the movement.

No definite goals: these always open the way for laying down arms, for the rhetoric of compromise and concessions, for conciliatory demobilizations. This time, we reject and we contest, so as to be sure of having nothing to receive, thus to avoid anything likely to smother the movement of revolution and radical transformation of society. We aim at shaking up the most stable, the most public, the most necessary structures of what makes up the basis of the social existence of capitalism. You have to have heard the naive astonishment of the Prefect of Police at the fact that one can yell "S.S." at any helmeted-billy-club-carrying-man-who-is-only-doing-his-job-as-a-cop in order to see why the bourgeoisie is unable to understand anything. It's because, for any student or anyone with his eyes open, a cop is, in his essence, an S.S. precisely because he is there in order to perform that function whose quintessence was revealed by the S.S. : to keep order, that is the institutionalized disorder of bourgeois society, its system of repression in relation to everything that doesn't fit into what it has decided should be the organization of life. And above all, and first of all, to maintain this fundamental fact -- which is like the poisoned air without which the ideological lungs of the bourgeoisie couldn't breathe and would choke from too much oxygen, from too much freedom -- that is, that cops are necessary, that it goes without saying, that man is evil: first each man within himself, his secret devil, and above all each class for the other; that a society without cops is like a dog without a collar: anarchy, disorder, the arbitrary play of the blind powers of violence; and that

continued on page 46...

glossary

union and student organizations

CGT -General Confederation of Labor; largest union in France; Communist leadership; particularly strong in region of Paris

CFDT -French Democratic Federation of Labor; 2nd most influential union in France; politically allied with socialist party, the non-communist left of Mendes-France; more sympathetic to students than CGT

FO -Workers' Force; anti-communist union established after war with funds from CIA; strong in civil service but otherwise relatively weak

CDJA -Democratic Confederation of Young Agricultural Workers

UNEF -Nation Union of French Students; led opposition to Algerian war; allied to Socialist Party; for role in May-June battles, see text

FNEF -National Federation of French Students; established after Algerian war with government subsidies which formerly had gone to UNEF, politically controlled by right-wing elements

JCR -Revolutionary Communist Youth; trotskyst organization

FER -Federation of Revolutionary Students; as JCR

JCML -Marxist-Leninist Youth Group

UEC -Union of Communist Students

SNESup -teachers' union

FEN -another

political parties & misc. groups

PCF -French Communist Party

PSU -Unified Socialist Party

Anarchists -the Black Death

groupuscules -carriers of aforementioned plague

Occident -right-wing para-military group composed largely of youth and ex-parachutists (French Green Berets); specializes in commando raids on left-wing gatherings

CRS -Republican Company of Security; the pigs

Service of Order -any party-appointed group charged with defending demonstrators from their own enthusiasm and will to fight

and the supporting cast

Roche - Rector of Paris University

Grimaud - chief pig

Pompidou - Prime Minister

Waldeck Rochet - General secretary of Communist Party

Seguy - - General Secretary of CGT

Peyrefitte - Minister of National Education

de Gaulle - the chief

media

l'Humanité -the chief's friendly CP paper

Figaro -and another pro-government paper

le Monde - France's erudite version of NYTimes



W! CAW! CAW! CAW! CAW! CAW!

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NOUS SOMMES TOUS INDESIRABLES

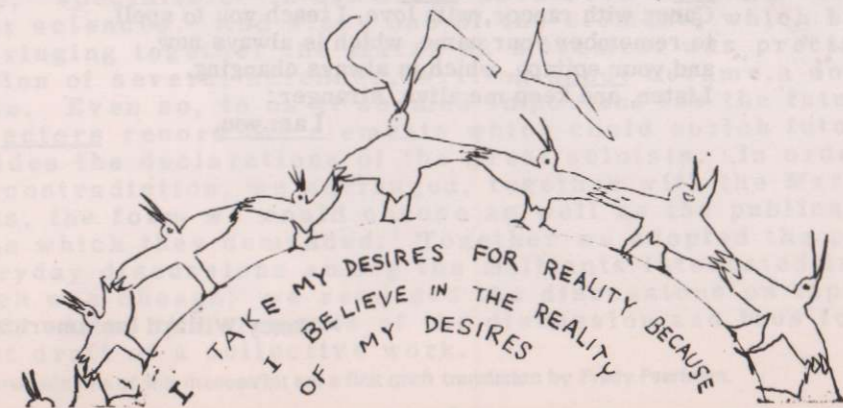
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INTRODUCTION

The Graffiti Poet

Who are you?

I grew up in the schoolrooms of the Dakotas,
I sat by the wood stove and longed for spring.
My desk leaned like a clavichord, stripped of its hammers,
and on it I carved my name, forever and ever,
so the seed of that place should never forget me.
Outside, in their beehive tombs, I could hear
the dead spinning extravagant honey.
I remembered their names and wanted only
that the living remember mine.

I am the invisible student, dead and
of a crowded class. I write and nobody answers.
On the Brooklyn Bridge, I wrote a poem:
the rain washed it away.
On the walls of the Pentagon, I made
my sign: a workman blasted me off like dung.
From the halls of Newark to the shores
of Detroit, I engraved my presence with fire
so the lords of those places may never forget me.

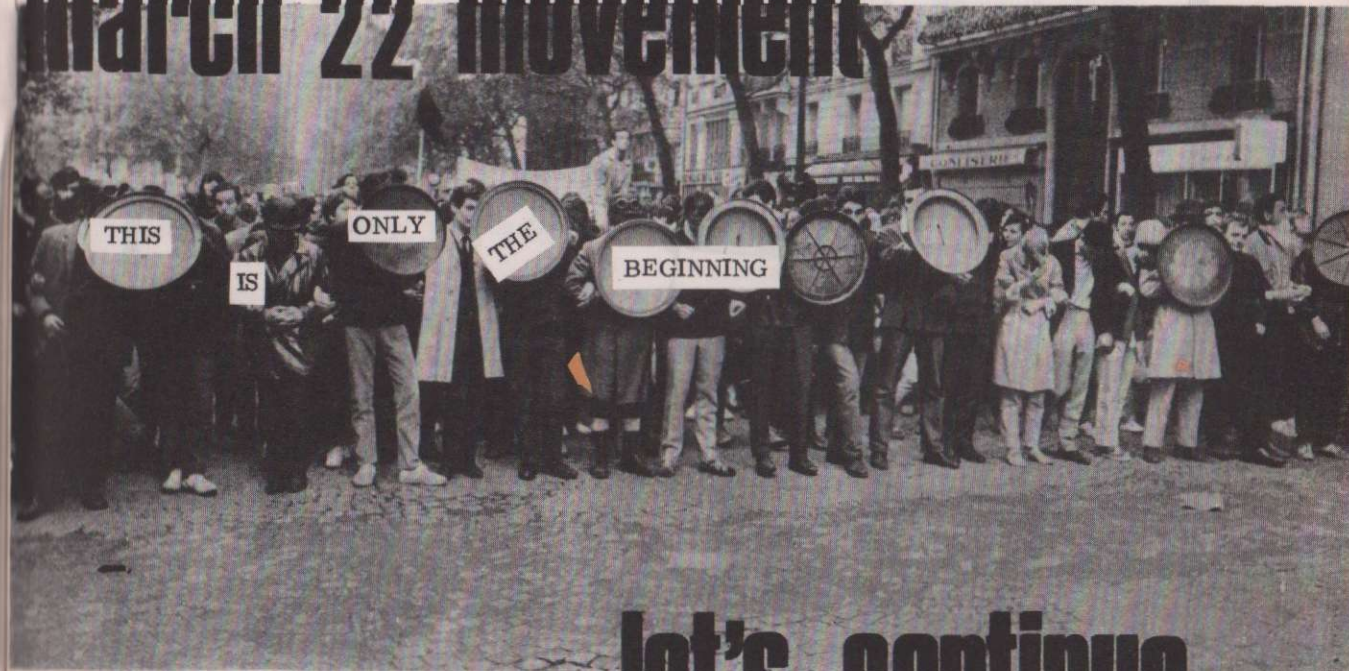
Save me. I can hardly speak. So we pass,
not speaking. In bars where your dreams drink,
I scrawl your name, my name, in a heart
that the morning daily erases.
At Dachau, at Belsen I blazoned my cell
with voices and saw my poem sucked
into a single cry:
throw me a fistful of stars.
I died writing, as the walls fell.

I am lonely. More than any monument,
I want you to see me writing: I love
you (or someone), I live (or you live).
Canny with rancor, with love, I teach you to spell,
to remember your name, which is always new,
and your epitaph, which is always changing.
Listen, and keep me alive, stranger:

I am you.

- Nancy Willard (an american poet)

march 22 movement



let's continue the struggle

This is not a book about the March 22 Movement but a book wanted by and written with. This is more than a variation in style: it's a difference in principle. After May 15 it became clear that the student struggles would be co-opted by writings; since that time, "specialists" in all areas have been making it the subject of their sciences. And since one of the elements which had contributed to bringing together the March 22 Movement was precisely the rejection of several sciences, writing about became a doubtful enterprise. Even so, to us it seemed important for the future to have the actors record the elements which could enrich future struggles -- besides the declarations of the great soloists. In order to avoid the contradiction, we envisaged, together with the March 22 militants, the form we would choose as well as the publication conditions which they demanded. Together we adopted the principle of everyday discussions among the militants interested in the subject which was chosen; we recorded the discussions on tape or by shorthand, edited the elements of the discussion and thus formed the first draft of a collective work.

The three sections of this manuscript are a first draft translation by Fredy Pearlman.



ACTION OF MARCH 22 MOVEMENT

discloses repressive structures

I.

At the University of Nanterre certain events had taken place during the months that preceded March 22. Some small interventions which inevitably were followed by reactions from the administration and provoked some agitation among the students. Some statements, some lectures: for example B.F.'s lecture on W. Reich and sexuality, which led to a struggle against the internal regulations, to an occupation of the girls' dorm in the Residential Section. This lecture called forth numerous petitions, and in particular a leaflet of the Residents' Association which denounced the sexual repression organized in University housing through the separation of girls from boys. A whole series of topics demonstrated this repression.

From this moment on one saw, from the way he acted, the real function of the dean. Even though in theory he had no right to intervene directly in the internal affairs of the University, he explained that he could not tolerate that agitation on this type of topic be organized in his University. He even wanted to prohibit the distribution of our leaflets.

All these lectures took place without a great deal of trouble. But two days after the one on Reich, 29 people are evicted from the Dorm. Five of them hadn't even participated in anything. The eviction of these 29 brings out the existence of black-

lists, lists on which the Administration has registered the names of those it wants to get rid of. For example, it became obvious that the administrative repression aimed at all political militants, particularly at the anarchists, the group in ARCUN (the Association of University Housing Residents of Nanterre). It's at this point that the theme of repression crystallized. The occupation took place on March 29, just before the Easter 1967 vacations. People thought that everything would be forgotten after vacations; but it remained in the minds of all those who had participated in any way.

At the beginning of the following school year, the question of the blacklists came up again. It wasn't certain that they existed, but at the same time it was obvious that the Administration knew who the political militants were, which indicated that the Administration had some means of information. Referring to the blacklists, students told each other, for example, that an administrator had made the following comment: "It's too bad this one came back, we'd have loved to have seen him go elsewhere." Another example: at the beginning of the year, Daniel Cohn-Bendit had gotten a letter which said, "Sir, since you live in the 15th district, there's no reason for you to take courses at Nanterre; go to the Sorbonne."

Thus it had been necessary, with the help of professors, to organize the support of Daniel Cohn-Bendit in Nanterre at the University, and little details like the one above showed clearly that the administration and the dean were looking for any means to stop political militants from acting. Many professors, in theory on our side, and even those who had pushed us to bring up the subject of the blacklists in the General Assembly of the University, finally backed off. Only Lefebvre remained cool, and suggested that this question be discussed in front of and by a jury of honor so as to find out, he said, who was lying. Then this question of the blacklists was forgotten again, although in almost any con-

What is sexual chaos?

- it's referring to the law on "matrimonial duty" in the matrimonial bed,
- it's contracting a sexual liaison for life without any previous sexual knowledge of the partner,
- it's "sleeping" with a working girl because "she's not worth more" while at the same time not asking for "something like that" from a "respectable" girl,
- it's the lewdness of a life of sordid prostitution, or the excitement, caused by abstinence, over "wedding night",
- it's making virile power culminate in deflowering;
- it's mentally pawing the image of a half naked woman up and down avidly at fourteen and then, at twenty, entering the lists as a nationalist in favor of "the purity and honor of women,"
- it's making possible the existence of those who don't function and inculcating their perverse fantasies into thousands of young people,
- it's punishing the young for the offense of self-satisfaction and making adolescents think that ejaculation causes them to lose spinal marrow,
- it's tolerating the pornography industry,
- it's exciting adolescents with erotic films, removing the satisfaction, but refusing them natural love and sexual satisfaction by calling on culture.

What sexual chaos is not!

- desiring mutual sexual abandon through mutual love without worrying about established laws or moral precepts and acting accordingly,
- liberating children and adolescents from feelings of sexual guilt and letting them live consistently with the aspirations of their age,
- not marrying or making durable ties without a precise sexual knowledge of the partner,
- not bringing to the world children until one wants them and can bring them up,
- not asking someone for the right to love and the right to sexual abandon,
- not killing the partner because of jealousy,
- not having relations with prostitutes, but with friends from one's own milieu,
- not making love in entrance ways like the adolescents of our society, but desiring to make love in clean rooms without being disturbed,
- finally, not maintaining an unhappy marriage and drudging because of moral scruple, etc., etc.

Cultural gab isn't going to end and the cultural revolutionary movement will not win if these questions aren't answered. (Reich's Manifesto, published in the organ Sexpol, in 1936)

text, in all kinds of circumstances, students and professors talked about it endlessly: for example, the Assembly of the Sociology Department found itself completely stopped almost every time it met. It was paralyzed because the same topic came up every time. Until the day when--was it in February?--the little demonstration by some anarchists took place, and the anarchists were joined by other comrades; the demonstrators carried posters with photographs of the plainclothes policemen. Immediately the rumor spread among professors and administrative employees that one of the posters said, "The dean is a cop..." The poster actually said: "No to the cops in the University..."

In any case, what's most interesting is not what was or what was

not written on the poster, but what followed: the dean in question called the police to intervene in the University.

At first there were two or five policemen, because the students fought with the administrative staff members who wanted to grab the posters with the photographs of the plainclothes policemen. There had been already run-ins with the staff members. Thus five policemen climbed up to the hall of the Sociology Department, and there they were thrown out by the students. A problem which appeared then, and which appeared again later, was the participation of the personnel in the different forms of repressive intervention by the administration, even in details. Since the beginning of the

year it was forbidden to smoke in the classrooms, and this prohibition was enforced by the personnel, who walked around the rooms. The students constantly opposed them, and treated them as cops. In the demonstration over the photographs of the plainclothes policemen, the personnel -- not all of them -- were once again on the side of the police.

In fact what this demonstration was all about, as well as the lectures which took place in spite of threats, was the introduction of freedom of political expression to Nanterre. All over the University there were posters which prohibited any demonstrations of a political character, and several times the dean had been asked to remove these prohibitions. So the anarchists decided to step in on the question of the presence of policemen. And on this question, without any kind of problem, other comrades who were not anarchists joined them. At this point a split took place: some professors argued, "No, the dean, an old resistance fighter, cannot be held responsible for the presence of plainclothes policemen in the University." And suddenly it was demonstrated to these professors that the dean was in collusion with the policemen. And they didn't draw any lessons from this; on the contrary, they ended up by justifying the dean's calling in the police in the name of the instinct of conservation of the University as a producer of cops for the bourgeoisie. Things became clear, concrete, instead of remaining just verbal assertions.

At that point we were not conscious of the existence of a "movement"; there was no general analysis of what had passed, any more than there were "perspectives" or a "platform."

What had taken place was a small action, a reduced action led by a group of anarchists; the action increased the opportunities to get in on things, to speak in the auditoriums and to challenge what the professors said, or to try to bring about this freedom of expression which didn't exist.

The initiatives were dispersed. In the Sociology Department, for example, where Dany was, there were no anarchists, but rather members of the JCR (Revolutionary Communist Youth) and the unorganized. They broke in with critiques of sociology: echoing Crozier's course on "organization": "Is bureaucratic organization, American style, useful in Vietnam, Mr. Crozier?" or "Is it very efficacious for liquidating the Vietnamese...?" And at the same time the students developed a more general critique of American sociology, the one he wanted to teach us and which served to better exploit, to further alienate the working class. The actions complemented each other, but there was no movement, there were numerous initiatives. The March 22 Movement was the meeting, on March 22, of all the students who had led actions, each in his own way.

March 22 constitutes a stage. Five or six militants of the National Vietnam Committee had been arrested in their homes, after the incidents at American Express during which some windows had been broken. The police arrested Boulte and some young high school students. On March 22, about 5 in the afternoon, a small group led by Daniel Cohn-Bendit and composed of militants who had participated in all the recent demonstrations in Nanterre, go through the auditoriums, the laboratories, interrupt courses, and announce: "At 5 o'clock, a meeting in Auditorium X to discuss what we can do about this menacing repressive machination..." Here there was something very new, because in reality we were occupying an auditorium, and this occupation before the event decided the rest. There were between 600 and 700 students who began to discuss: "What can we do? How can we show that we don't give a damn about the repression, that it won't stop us from acting, that in addition we want our comrades liberated immediately?" After some very long discussions, the decision to occupy the Administration Building at Nanterre was taken. The numerous discussions had carried the day: students didn't

leave until after they had decided on an action which they undertook immediately. Dany proposed the occupation of the Sociology Building because on Friday there were mainly sociologists at Nanterre, and in addition there was the precedent of the actions undertaken in the Sociology Department. When the police car came on Friday, it was in the Sociology Building that the students found refuge. During the general assembly some students said: "That isn't true; there are numerous other departments where people participate in different ways in anti-imperialist or other struggles. So that we have to occupy something which is common to everyone, and not just the Sociology Building." That's how the idea to occupy the Administration Building was born--this was particularly relevant since it's the Administration which conducted the repression in the University.

Another important point was cleared up immediately. The people who had been arrested were militants of the National Vietnam Committee. A militant of the National Vietnam Committee started to explain the role and the goals of the NVC: "Yes, militants of the NVC were arrested because they're the greatest threat to the bourgeoisie. . ." and a whole political exposé which Dany interrupted, telling the militant that everyone in the room agreed to support the prisoners, that there was no need for an explanation to fight against imperialism with the line of the NVC, that here everyone was for the victory of the Vietnamese people, and so on, that this was the basic condition for being here. To all the rank and file Committees, to the National Vietnam Committee, to all those present, this was a new language. That's when the March 22 Movement was born. You belonged to the March 22 Movement if you were anti-imperialist, whether you're in a rank and file committee, pro-Chinese, or anything else. That evening there was a meeting in the Administration Building, with political discussions that lasted until 2 in the morning and which were more or less inspired by the example of the German SDS (Socialist Student Federation). There were discussions on what the Critical University should be, on anti-imperialist struggles, on capitalism today. The occupation took

place without incidents. There were 142 students in the administrative building. They spent a part of the night there, and at 2 in the morning the arrested NVC comrades were released.

During the night of March 22, among other projects, it was decided that a major discussion day would be organized at the University, on the topic of anti-imperialist struggles: this was to take place on March 29, Friday, the day when sociologists are most numerous. The students thought everything would work out: the University would be closed for a whole day, and general political discussions were planned. A general assembly was first of all divided into commissions devoted to the subjects which had been treated on the night of March 22: the anti-imperialist struggle, capitalism today, the relationship between student struggles and workers' struggles. Incidents multiplied between March 22 and March 29. For example, 200 students penetrated into a congress of Spanish professors and asked them to sign a petition against the Franco dictatorship. The professors were panic stricken, especially since many of them were more or less fascist. They went looking for the dean, and told him: "If you don't assure our security, we'll assure it ourselves: we'll buy rifles."

Numerous similar events took place every day. The FNEF (National Federation of French Students - a government supported, student union) took a position too, saying that if these madmen, these terrible communists, etc., were allowed to develop their actions in the University, the FNEF would react, would fight, and would throw the madmen out. The panic stricken dean decided to close the University on Thursday the 28th, in the evening. He spoke in the auditorium and announced that he'd close the University for two days, that is until the following Monday. On Friday the 29th, about 500 students came anyway, in front of the dorms, on the lawns, in front of the University which wasn't closed because the dean's decision hadn't been covered by the ministry; but no one went in. On the 29th it was decided to postpone the day of the discussion until April 2, and the dean had to let April 2 unfold completely. A comrade from the SDS spoke, and he was followed by political discussions on various themes. It was at this point that the occupation of the

University of Nanterre by the March 22 Movement (which at that time was called the Movement of 142) became semi-permanent. Every day there were reunions everywhere. Some comrades argued in the halls while others put up posters. In short, *Shit in the University!* Thus it was time to eliminate the provocators. Easter vacations had arrived. Among the left militants at the Sorbonne and elsewhere, people said: "At Nanterre they've started something. They're nice, and it's interesting, but they're doing it at the wrongtime because it's almost the end of the year; it won't last. . ."

Two or three days before the Easter vacations, a completely bureaucratic meeting was organized at the Sorbonne, with the international commission of the UNEF (National Union of French Students); there were some comrades from the German SDS, some Italians, some Belgians. They all explained that something was happening in their countries. Everywhere except in France. Basically it was to incite French students to take the others as models. It's interesting that they all spoke about the occupation of their universities, and while telling what they'd done to obtain the freedom of political expression, they insisted that it had always begun with the issue of Vietnam. There was an intervention by a person from MAU (Action Movement of the University - a short lived group formed by 2 past presidents of FGEL, the UNEF chapter at the Sorbonne, which is further left) which caused some reactions. A group from Nanterre took the floor: "We don't want anything to do with MAU. Your initiative doesn't correspond to anything, to any real movement. What's possible after a while is a university anti-imperialist front and for that a certain number of actions have to be developed, actions which will be designed at that point. But a movement can't be created from on high following one or another model."

There were 700 CRS (Compagnies Republicanines de Sécurité, the riot police) around the Sorbonne when we arrived, and people in the courtyard were saying, "The meeting is forbidden; should we hold it anyway or should we go home?" At that point Dany took the microphone and said, "We've no intention to pose such questions. At Nanterre we've been occupying our auditoriums for several days. We only have to occupy one of them, and

N'allez pas en Grèce cet été, restez à la Sorbonne

there we are: let's go." Everyone went into the auditorium, and at that point the students realized they had occupied the Sorbonne, which they'd dreamed about for four years. At midnight someone asked, "What's been done?" The Nanterre people said, "Now that you're here, now that you're occupying, as you say, you have to discuss what you'll do to maintain your occupations, what sort of work you'll do." No reaction. Someone said, "Well, it's up to the political troops to decide to hold political reunions in the Sorbonne, and not to meet in infected places any more." No reaction. Then someone else said, "What's got to be done is that all the signs which say, 'Political discussions are prohibited' have to be replaced by signs which say, 'Political discussions are authorized.'"

Then some comrades wrote those signs really fast, and all they did afterward was go to sleep; it was really lousy.

At Nanterre things continued after Easter vacation. Always the same old shit: some people called meetings, some commissions worked, and absolutely everywhere there were posters about the work of different commissions. The idea of boycotting the exams got around more and more. Students got the impression that these commissions were a hell of a lot more interesting than the exams. There were some people who no longer worked at all; they just went to commissions. So it seems that nothing would have happened on May 3 if the University of Nanterre hadn't been closed again because students had decided to hold two anti-imperialist days.

On May 2 films on Black Power were shown. The fascists threatened to break in. At that point a real psychosis reigned in Nanterre, a psychosis created by the Vietnam committees and the pro-Chinese, the only ones who were organized against the fascists. They came to defend the University of Nanterre, but to defend it by following completely Chinese models,

saying: "Students of Nanterre, you stay inside the university as a self-defense group; we'll go on the roofs with sling shots and all other kinds of materials." They planned to dig trenches and to put tree trunks over them so that the fascists' cars would fall into the trenches, if they came in cars. They also wanted to spread around some liquid stuff on which the fascists would slip. They said, "We can catapult some tables off the roofs with very resilient elastic." "But do you know that works?" "Oh, in any case, that's what they did at the University of Peking, so that it should work!" During the night between May 1 and 2 many militants stayed to talk to the pro-Chinese and got completely intoxicated; at 2 in the morning some of them went to the Bois de Boulogne (the Forest of Boulogne) to cut branches for sling-shots, and finally, just for good form, they picked up everything they found. The psychosis was such that the few militants responsible for the anti-imperialist days at Nanterre couldn't hold these back. That evening there was a totally chaotic meeting where the militants got into fights with members of the Vietnam committees: "You kept us from holding meetings by creating a general psychosis about nothing at all." The atmosphere was such that the dean decided to close the University until the following day. There were fights in the hallways. It was pretty uncomfortable. Daniel had been arrested eight days before; he was liberated this evening. People sat all day asking each other what to organize. Then all the political organizations were called together to decide what to do.

On May 3 the University was closed. A comrade said, "There should be a meeting at the Sorbonne." We go there and find a large number of March 22 people in the Sorbonne courtyard. The service of order (defense committee) of the JCR (Revolutionary Communist Youth) and that of the FER (Federation of Revolutionary Students)-- both Trotskyist -- were there to guard the University against the fascists of the Occident group (Right Wing para-military group) who said they'd attack. The cops came about 4 o'clock. The service of order tried to barricade the entrances. The March 22 people had discussions in the courtyard. Slowly the library got closed down. That wasn't official; there were rumors, but one

could still go out. A demonstration takes place at the Censier Center (Annex to the Sorbonne) explaining that the Sorbonne was closed and that courses could no longer be held there. The Sorbonne got increasingly blocked up. Courses were interrupted. The police continued to let students out until 4 in the afternoon. But then a large number of police cars arrived, the cops entered from the Sorbonne Plaza in march step. The students who went out said, "What's going to happen is going to be horrible, because the comrades inside built barricades thinking the fascists were coming; they're going to fight and it's going to be bloody."

Those who were outside said, "If its bloody inside, we've got to divide the cops by making it just as bloody at the bottom of the Boulevard Saint Michel." The demonstration against the cops, at 4:30 that afternoon was more or less spontaneous; its sole aim was to help the comrades who were inside the Sorbonne: Blood for blood to help the comrades.

During that time, inside the Sorbonne, the service of order tried to talk to the guys precisely to avoid any bloodshed. And its members tell that the cops said: "We agree to let you go out in a line all the way to the Saint-Michel subway, and then go home quietly."

The March 22 militants wanted to go to the upper floors to hold out behind barricades. Others said: "No, we'll go out, putting the women in front and the guys behind." Then the cops started trying to arrest the women but they noticed that there were more people in the Sorbonne than they'd expected, and they didn't have enough prison vans. So they let the women go out and they only arrested the men, plus some women from Nanterre who stayed among the men and didn't want to go out. The students of the Federation of Revolutionary Students (FER) weren't arrested. They said, "We'll stay and be last; we'll let the whole procession go by." And after the cops had arrested the other, the FER students went out in the street to try to stop the other demonstration in the street saying, "You're out of your minds to fight against the cops; that's not possible; this demonstration must absolutely be stopped."

But outside everyone was very excited about seeing 400 or 500 comrades--no one knew exactly how many-- in the police vans. The fight began spontaneously.

This disclosure of repressive structures thus followed a dialectic which we hadn't suspected. But we always wanted to go all the way, precisely to force those in power to unveil themselves much more than they had done. No one knew the police would be called in. But it's the logic of the system for Roche (Rector of the Academy of Paris) to call the cops to the Sorbonne after Grappin (Dean of Nanterre - elected by the faculty) had called them to Nanterre. At the Sorbonne this had never been done. So long as the cops were in Nanterre, a formless place, sort of a new thing, a no man's land, a novelty in a new place, it didn't really hit people; Nanterre is far. But the cops at the Sorbonne! -- the two words really made people move. That's why people who weren't really militant or had never been in the UNEF (National Union of French Students), were surprised when they heard the news. They immediately felt connected with this event. "How come there are cops? Who made the cops go into the Sorbonne?" People knew enough about the UNEF and its mores to doubt that it

had led political discussions which would have invited cops to the Sorbonne. So people asked if there was something new. They thought it had all happened because some guys from Nanterre had come to the Sorbonne and they had no business there. Finally it was all very clear: they were afraid of the "madmen" of Nanterre who had come to plant their shit at the Sorbonne after Nanterre was closed down. There were modes of action which disconcerted the entire administrative apparatus.

What happened that afternoon was new in more ways than one. The service of order had left after sort of a meeting, and the guys from Nanterre had said, "We'll stay in the courtyard to discuss politics." Usually a meeting at the Sorbonne only lasts half an hour. But this time, at four in the afternoon, people sat in the courtyard and discussed politics. And naturally no one knew whether or not these people were going to take off for one of the auditoriums with their discussions, and lead other students with them. And it was this sort of thing that had to be stopped at its roots. Here resides a subtle game which was played just as well

Saturday, May 4 Scuffles in the Latin Quarter

Press + university + cops + owners = repression
 Why are the students "enraged"?
 The papers write about "madmen," about a "golden" youth who want to get rid of their idleness by throwing themselves into violence and vandalism.
 What's the purpose of those articles?
 Only one: to cut the students off from the workers, to caricature their struggle to isolate in order to muzzle them better.
 Three thousand students fought the police for five hours last Friday--is this the handful of trouble-makers referred to by the Minister of National Education, Peyrefitte?
 NO!
 We're fighting because we refuse to become
 --professors at the service of selection in teaching, which is paid for by the children of the working class,
 --sociologists who manufacture slogans for the government's electoral campaigns,
 --psychologists charged with making "operational" the "teams" of workers "according to the best interests of the owners,"
 --scientists whose research work will be used exclusively in the interest of the profit economy.
 We refuse this future as "watchdogs."
 We refuse the courses which teach us to become that.
 We refuse the tests and the titles which compensate those who have accepted to enter into the system.
 We refuse to be recruited by these "mafias."
 We refuse to improve the bourgeois university.
 We want to transform it radically so that it will educate intellectuals who will fight with the workers.
 Wherever you are, wherever we are, let us all mobilize against bourgeois repression.

March 22 Movement

by the students as by the government: "No, that can't happen at the Sorbonne". They'd let the wart grow at Nanterre; they'd wanted the experience to see what would happen on a liberal arts campus-- the only one in France.

The FER and other little political groups were furious. They thought that if the students stayed there, discussing, everyone would find out about it, the fascists too; the fascists would come, and the FER's service of order would have to protect people who refused to be part of it. "You'll get us massacred," they said, and that's what they'd been saying since March 22. They wanted the whole thing to end right away.

Not everyone was convinced of the importance of this day, May 3. We spent all our time at the demonstration recruiting, agreeing on places to meet, to discuss what we were going to do. We went to see everyone. And there was a meeting that evening. People said, "It's terrific. This is a new type of demonstration, with people you don't know but who you can count on, who exist, who had never been united by all our little movements. This shows there's something to do, that we've got to take advantage of this possibility." One thing was foreseen. On Monday, Dany and Co. were to appear in front of the Disciplinary Council. Some people wanted to argue about that in a legal manner: "If there's a demonstration on that evening, then its theme has to be the defense of the comrades who passed by the Disciplinary Council." The comrades were told about the charges against the people arrested, but it became obvious that no issues could be drawn from that, it wasn't interesting. Even so, it was decided that the comrades wouldn't pass by the Disciplinary Council on Monday without something being done about it. At the meeting on Friday the JCML (Marxist-Leninist Communist Youth) came and announced: "At the demonstration we got together 300 people we didn't know, and we're now organizing them into a defense committee against the repression. They're ready to work at distributing leaflets in the districts, telling what happened, to wake up the population and to show what the cops are, what the government is -- repressive."

That's when we told ourselves: "On Monday there's got to be an enormous demonstration against the repression, one which makes it lucid that we're not sheep, that there's an active attitude to be taken toward this repression." The demonstration lasted all day long. There were harassments from the morning on. In addition, everything wasn't clear since it hadn't been decided in detail in advance. The students prepared themselves against the cops the way they prepared against the fascists of the Occident group. The equipment which had been prepared against them on May 2 was used at this demonstration.

This was an active demonstration. At Maubert-Mutualité (section in the Latin Quarter) the comrades who entered the service of order threw cobblestones at the automatic water pumps of the police and forced them to back up. Friday's demonstration had given some ideas on fighting the cops. What's essential is that no one really organized (the newspapers wrote about urban guerrilla groups!). It was simply said, "There'll be small meetings everywhere all day long, and then we'll see what happens in each particular situation. It may or may not get violent. The UNEF (student union) retinue will be embarrassed at the end in any case. Anyway what we've got to show is that repression doesn't make us duck out." This continued to be the March 22 theme. The administrative buildings are occupied to show that the repression doesn't mean anything, that we'll continue. It was the same thing on Monday, and even more important was the fact that in all the actions after May 6, we'd moved to the other side of fear. Every time March 22 acted we met in the evening, which hadn't been the case before. Everyday the other groups were surprised by the fighting spirit of those who were there, and by their number; their analyses did not correspond at all to the stage of the development of the struggle. We had all been very surprised by what had happened Friday when no one had been warned, and we knew that Monday there'd be a lot of people. But on Tuesday we told ourselves, "The UNEF (student union) has come back to manipulate the procession; it controls, slows down, to stay in the traditional mode." Among other things there had been the walk to the Champs-Élysées on Tuesday, May 7, and still worse, the walk from

the Halle aux Vins to Luxembourg. After this demonstration, the March 22 militants were totally disgusted. We were starting to think it was all over, when suddenly Geismar (of the professors' union) arrives about 2 or 3 in the morning, starts out with an extraordinary self-critique, explaining how the union bureaucracy works, tries to stop the battles, to group them, to channel them in order to get credit for their effects while turning them off. And even more extraordinary, he says: "What makes me sickest of all is that I'm going to be accused of having turned people in." "Yes, now the police let the French students free after the demonstrations, but not the foreigners, either students or workers." The March 22 students react immediately: "What has to be organized is a really tough demonstration demanding the liberation of everyone, complete amnesty for everyone, and in particular for the foreigners who were arrested." This was decided for Friday May 10. The usual questions came back: "Who will come to this demonstration? Will there be workers? Will the fighting spirit be greater?" We doubted, a priori, that workers would join us just because we'd be defending workers and not just students. The argument, referring to the evenings of May 3 and May 6, was that the level of combativity among the students had been very high and that this alone almost implied a struggle by the working class and not just by the students. This idea had been developed in discussions since Friday evening.

The route which was decided on passed by Denfert-Rochereau and les Gobelins. Due to the presence of high school students, the radio endlessly repeated that there were numerous fourteen and fifteen year olds. And this presence was essential for the atmosphere of that night. On Wednesday we chose the Santé prison as our objective. The idea of going to the Ministry of Justice made everyone mad because this would take up the slogan of the FER, who constantly repeated: "a central demonstration of a million in front of the Ministry of National Education." We concentrated on the Santé, but the fact that the UNEF put itself at the head of the issue changed everything and, as usual, channeled the demonstration toward the Sorbonne.

At Denfert-Rochereau, Dany presented

the proposals without saying what group they came from. At one point he said, "Some comrades propose forming little groups of 1500 and going to the suburbs, toward the Place d'Italie." Everyone shouted, "Out of the question; we'll stay together." And that's how, by taking the suggestions and the ideas of this or that person, the itinerary was made up. At the political level this wasn't clear. The fact that the UNEF put itself at the head of the demonstration, the way it was to do again on May 24 at the Gare de Lyon created in many people's minds, even among those who were there, the idea that it was strictly a student demonstration, and that the demonstrations always headed toward the occupied Sorbonne. If the demonstration hadn't been organized by the UNEF, proposals like the one about the groups of 1500 would have had a much larger audience. The theme we had decided on, namely the repression of workers and foreigners, was drowned in the general discussion by what's called public opinion. The objective, the Santé prison, was chosen, but the demonstration passed in front of it and that's all.

At the same time it should be recognized that, besides the little groups and the March 22 Movement, people were there because the UNEF had called for a protest against the repression, and its call had gone beyond the student world. On the barricades there were workers who had come from far away; there were some who had come from the West suburb. At first we wanted to go in front of the Ministry of Justice, passing by the Assembly, but when we arrived at the corner of Boulevards Saint-Germain and Saint-Michel, the police barrages closed everything. There was no choice but to go back up Boulevard Saint-Michel. We asked ourselves, "Why are they making us pass by the Boulevard Saint-Michel?" Later on it became clear that those in power wanted to close us into the ghetto of the Latin Quarter. Then it was said: "We won't leave the Boulevard Saint-Michel without defending ourselves." How would we defend ourselves? By making barricades and, above all, by not provoking. Until 1 o'clock in the morning there were about 3000 to 4000 high school students among us.

As one arrived at the summit of Boule-

vard Saint-Michel, one could see signs being pulled out and could hear the deafening sound of a pneumatic drill. The 30,000 of us were divided into two clans; one said, "I'll go home because there's going to be a fight," while the other said, "I'll stay because there's going to be a fight." The first barricades were put together on Sainte-Geneviève Hill, at the corner of Clovis and Mouffetard Streets. Daniel Cohn-Bendit, and two of his comrades arrived. All the anarchists at the barricade stopped to listen. No one said, "But you're not one of us, you're not one of our group." Dany went by several barricades with guys from the March 22; he did this because he didn't want a massacre, and he was asking people not to attack first. Ever since Wednesday's discussion of this demonstration, and due to the attitude of the UNEF which always put forward its service of order, people told themselves it was dumb for the service of order to be the only ones protected; that meant encircling a completely sheepish demonstration around participants who were afraid. Afraid that cops would come, this service of order was numerically insufficient to build a single effective barricade, and that meant demonstrators would get massacred.

We said, "The guys at the demonstration are able to defend themselves," and we had decided that on May 10 there wouldn't be any service of order so that everyone would be in it. Dany and two comrades placed themselves at the corner of Boulevards Saint-Michel and Saint-Germain, calling, "Cut the chains; don't make chains across the side-streets, so that the population can get in--everyone becomes his own service of order."

At Lhomond Street there were from 70 to 100 people at one barricade; from 50 to 60 were students, and the rest were inhabitants of the neighborhood, workers, employees, people who had never before gone to demonstrations. And these people didn't imagine they were doing illegal things; for example, they could have told us: "dirty little students, you're ruining our cars." They didn't say that at all; on the contrary, a guy who was there just when a two horsepower Citroen was being transported to a barricade said, "It's Marcel's car; he sure won't be very happy," and this was hilarious for him. It was really total detachment.

On the night of May 10 to 11, something

profound happened, which unified the students with other sections of the population in the action. We hadn't thought about it too much before, and there it was, it had been created in fact. The day of the general strike, Monday May 13, we did everything to get people to yell, "Workers-students, a single struggle." But it was also a fact that the CGT (General Confederation of Labor) and the PCF (French Communist Party) reacted like the cops had, trying to close the students into their ghetto, cloistering the demonstration, the students over here, the workers over there. When we understood this we reacted by making a parallel procession. At Saint-Martin and Beaubourg Streets, two processions marched next to each other. And at every side street some people, especially young people, came running to join us, leaving the "official" procession. Some comrades in the "official" demonstration talked to young people from Aubervilliers, Hispano Suiza and from the 18th District, and tried to get out, but the service of order of the CGT closed its ranks around the demonstration, calling, "push in, push in." Finally, in a magnificent manner, there were 5000 to 6000 of us at the head, with red and black flags together, yelling tough slogans. The students, whom the CGT directors considered leftists, adventurists, whose problems the CGT considered unimportant, were at the head of a demonstration of a million. Naturally those who followed didn't know it, no one told them too much about it afterwards, but in the photographs of the procession that marched passed Châtelot there wasn't a single one of the CGT posters. Until this demonstration, the students who had demonstrated since May 1 had tried to slip into the processions with their placards and they were usually chased out brutally; this time they had the guts to place themselves at the head. But there was a lot of confusion during the whole demonstration. For example, when the procession passed by the police headquarters, we noticed that the flags weren't all being carried by March 22 comrades, but by some functionaries of the CGT who had infiltrated. In front of the headquarters, the tricolor flag was replaced by a red flag, and someone said, "Let's charge." Then someone else said, "No, comrade, that isn't done." We asked who that was, and we noticed that we didn't know him; it was a guy from the CGT.

At Champ de Mars, Dany said, "Those who want to continue, to the right; those who want to stop, to the left." The slogan "To the Elysée" appeared, and lots of people butted in saying, "Comrade, that's stupid." We concluded that before going to the Elysée we should count how many there were. We could count those who were really tough. And we realized that there were enough who were tough to fill the Champ de Mars--people who responded to tough slogans and tough discussions.

On Sunday and on the 13th, leaflets had been distributed. And those who distributed the leaflets were workers,

laborers--they weren't the people who had been seen at Nanterre, but those who had been on the barricades. Afterwards, the Sorbonne was occupied on May 13, then the factories were occupied, the movement was transcended and the working class took charge of it.

The whole rest of the week which started on the 13th, a lot of work was done at the factories talking to the men. It was obvious that the Party was cracking. When the factories began to be occupied, there were numerous encounters between students and workers at the gates to the factories, but these no longer had the same

May 15

A CALL

LET'S BUILD REVOLUTIONARY ACTION COMMITTEES

The new type of political expression and the struggle set off by the March 22 Movement has proved that power is conquered in the street.

Following the example of the workers of Caen, Mulhouse, Le Mans, Redon, de la Rhodia in Paris, college students, high school students and workers demonstrated against the State's police repression and fought in the street for several hours against 10,000 cops on the night of Friday, May 10, 1968. The bourgeoisie tried to batter a form of opposition which directly challenges its power.

The demonstrators, fully supported by the population, opposed the violence of the bourgeoisie with political determination: the mercenaries of the bourgeoisie got to savor Molotov cocktails and got a taste of paving-stones in front of the barricades. Several hundred of them remained on the ground. Students and workers learned to fight. In the future they'll show that they won't forget this lesson.

In the face of this resistance and of its massive support from workers, the police state backed up and gave in on the first three important conditions laid down by the demonstrators. But the main problems remain unsolved. The struggle against repression is a struggle against the police state and against capitalist exploitation. The cops are nothing more than flunkies of the government and the government is nothing more than a flunkie of the bourgeoisie.

On May 13 students and workers met in the street once again and opened a political discussion; in order to continue it they permanently occupied the Faculties of the University of Paris. Then the strikes and factory occupations began.

In order to realize the demands of all the workers, in order to really reach our objectives, to prepare in our daily action the conquest of power by the proletariat, workers and students, WHEREVER WE ARE, LET'S ORGANIZE

REVOLUTIONARY ACTION COMMITTEES (R.A.C.)

* Let's form DISCUSSION GROUPS where everything can be questioned, where new critical objectives will be defined and the appropriate struggles will be organized.

* Let's prepare a COORDINATION of our Revolutionary Action Committees through permanent contact and common action.

* Let's EXPRESS OURSELVES through leaflets, newspapers, speeches in the street, posters on walls, films, etc., so that the voice of the workers may drown out the lies of the bourgeoisie.

* Against the police repression, against capitalist violence, to secure the autonomy of our political action and to create the means to reach our goals, let's organize our self-defense.

LET'S FORM REVOLUTIONARY ACTION COMMITTEES - The March 22 Movement

character. The pro-Chinese were bypassed by the events; they were left saying, "We'll take coffee to the people who are there." Meanwhile we talked about what could be done, about the occupations. Very quickly, after four days, we started to talk about active strikes, about food and provisions and things like that. The motto of self-defense was brought up, with the explanation, "If you occupy your factories, make them run for you." Eight or ten days later those in power brandished the specter of fascism and repression. And the CGT did the same thing, asking, "What do you propose?" "Some exchange among enterprises which is completely outside the usual circuit: we want the workers to take power." They told us if that was done the army would intervene and shoot: "They didn't shoot at you, they threw gas grenades, because you're students; but they don't treat workers the same way." On a whole series of very concrete topics, the party people particularly, even more than CGT people, stopped short.

In the enterprises where we went to discuss, we noticed that there was a strong fighting spirit among the workers who wanted to continue the occupations and wanted to transform them into something different from "the usual type of strike." But no one wanted to take the initiative. This was even true in factories where there already existed an opposition to the Party, to the CGT. That's why about May 20 we thought, "All that isn't going well at all, the occupations, the strike--it's all going to fizzle out." We thought another demonstration was needed to give new life to the occupations, on the theme of transforming the occupations: "to put the factories at the service of laborers; power to the rank and file."

The idea was launched. First we went to see other movements. Everyone said things weren't going particularly well. Then there was the demonstration at the Gare de Lyon which even so had 100,000 people--a demonstration which hadn't been called by any of the traditional organizations, except that at the last minute the UNEF hung on with its orientation of putting in front of the demonstration the fact that Dany wasn't allowed to enter France. There were other things about this demonstration: we didn't want a confrontation at the Gare de Lyon, since this wouldn't have made too much sense.

We had other objectives, particularly the Bourse (Stock Exchange), the temple of profit, as the posters said afterwards. We had decided to go there to create chaos--fire and everything else. When we learned there were barricades in front of it, we decided there had to be many fronts. You can't fight cops just like that, given the difference in weapons. So we left some people there making their barricades. At the same time other barricades were made, and then comrades were sent to the Bourse since that was one of the objectives, and not spreading fire and blood all over Paris. From the very beginning we'd been kept from fire; there hadn't really been any exemplary actions with respect to capitalism, to production, to the Bourse and so on. The UNEF had stopped that by saying, "No, no, to the Latin Quarter." Right after the Bourse they announced, "There's fighting in the Latin Quarter." We wanted to stay on in the north of Paris, on the other side of the Seine, to join the workers; it was a big mistake to go back to the Latin Quarter.

We wanted to see which different forces had allied to go back to the Latin Quarter: there was first of all the service of order of the UNEF, the UEC (Union of Communist Students) more or less (rather more than less), and the cops. In the Latin Quarter a provocation by the cops had brought about the immediate construction of barricades, and the radio announced, "There are barricades in the Quarter, people are fighting, and they are not very numerous." At that point the comrades at the Bourse thought, "We can't let our comrades get massacred, we'll go to the Latin Quarter." And the Pont'Neuf (New Bridge) was open--in other words, the cops were leaving open a passage right to the Latin Quarter. This type of coincidence is interesting.

What can be added here is that, during the period when there were no barricades, one saw that finally this scandalous student movement had overflowed effectively into the general strikes started by young workers, and that the ties which were created between young workers and students demonstrated the repression of the unions and the Communist Party. But what happened is that this was seen clearly, and sometimes even actively through blows, by the students, but no one else seems to have seen it--well, maybe sometimes at

Renault. . . But even now, *l'Humanité* (Communist Party newspaper) has a title which says, "The government and the owners are prolonging the strikes," showing that this repression hadn't been lived by the workers, or by members of the PSU (United Socialist Party).

At Hispano-Suiza, one of the factories where I went, some young guys interrupted the functionaries saying, "It's with the students we've got a common language, while you. . ." The functionaries, for example, said: "You, the students, should go to the country to get some food." That was one of our plans, we weren't against it. But the young workers said, "You bastard, you want to send them to the country so they won't stay here and talk with us." This was felt by the rank and file, but the big problem was that they had no other spokesmen than the CGT. What's really interesting is what's happening nowadays, when work has started up again. Until now the CGT had called for organization and elaboration of demands by the rank and file. But the CGT functionaries hadn't elaborated any. Now that the problem of re-turning to work is being posed, the strike committees, whether or not they're union members, are making the lists of demands.

I saw that at the Bon Marché (department store), for example, there were two pages of demands which had nothing to do with the national program of the CGT. I think this is a new step which is being taken today. Guys who aren't unionized and who are completely apolitical understand what those demands mean. Demands are starting to emerge. The men knew they hadn't occupied the factories for the national program of the CGT, but they didn't know why; and when they're asked to dis-occupy them, they start to ask why.

Finally, from the very first days the struggle showed that the real power was hidden in places where one least expected to find it, namely:

- At the university, the professors, the deans, etc.
- At the political level in the street fights, the CRS (riot police) was the government's only means of intervention (because there had been no other, not a single one).
- At the level of production, the real

power wasn't the owner who is known by everyone (at least by the workers) as the authority. The masked real authority, the one that maintains the capitalist state and its repression, were the unions and the Communist Party, which played the objective role of reflecting the system and co-opting it.

For the mass of workers, the title of *l'Humanité* is very significant. We watched the evolution of *l'Huma* when public opinion shifted toward the students. Suddenly the phraseology of *l'Huma* became leftist. But supporting students can just as easily be reformist as revolutionary. The examples of the Socialist Party, of Mendes, of Mitterrand prove it. The workers could easily support the students. At one point, on May 13, posters were made by some cells. There were posters made by hand by party members who were afraid their members were going to desert them to join the March 22 Movement or some other group which the party members didn't know too much about. We went out of a meeting one Sunday night and saw all the little posters made in a hurry to give instructions which would prevent a leftward shift; it was all very clear. But this wasn't taken up yet by *l'Huma*. One has the impression that something was closed up from somewhere, and that things aren't as clear as all that to the rank and file.

When two-mile long charters come out today it's incomparably better than the false demands of the National Council of the CGT, but on the other hand if one is really conscious of the problem he doesn't need two miles. "Power to the workers"--that doesn't need two miles of demands. But "Power to the workers" doesn't mean anything specific to a lot of people, particularly workers. "Power to the workers" involves a series of concrete and very important measures. At the Bon Marche, for example, the charter includes, "We don't want retired officers as overseers; political freedom, union rights. . ." The revolutionary movement was created through the encounter of a certain number of people. This is clear in what they wrote. But there are others who said, "Now that a huge thing has been set off, we can leave it and continue by ourselves, we can continue our theoretical work, our political

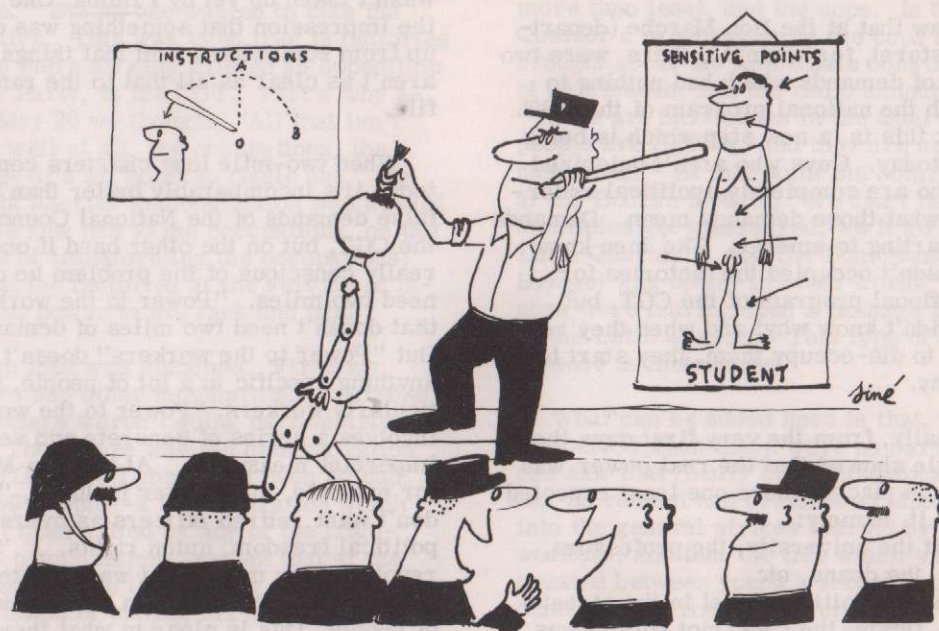
and party work." And they no longer listen to the masses of people who followed them. At this point everything can fail. And not only on the level of the working class. Why do people suddenly bring out their little personal problems, or their old projects? It's precisely because they no longer know what to do in a situation in which the workers don't get to the point of expressing themselves.

The workers hadn't expressed themselves before either. And now these people say, "Here we are, we're the vanguard, long live us, we've finally set off the movement we'd announced in our works," and they no longer listen. The working class can say what it wants, these people no longer care, they're sanctified, blessed by the events.

What kind of action, what kind of organization is needed to make connections with the working class. That's how the question is asked. But one doesn't say, "We'll make an organization which will relate to the working class." Because

the working class is also organized, structured. If one arrives and says, "I'm a representative of the March 22 Movement," or "I'm March 22," the discussion becomes structured immediately; bureaucrats speak to you and you have to justify yourself, answer their questions. On the other hand, if you don't try to introduce yourself to them as March 22, if you just talk to the workers and ask what's to be done together, if you throw the functionaries in with the rest without differentiating them by calling them you or they, then you can get very far.

It's precisely the way the Party tries to "situate" us. That's where one sees the difference. Its functionaries try to situate us as the students' representatives. They recognize us, but to each his own realm. They try to institute a system of mirrors in which you look at yourself in the whites of their eyes. But what makes March 22 work? The fact that we don't make ourselves seem like the depositories of the knowledge of the revolution.



- WE STUDY TOO!

"To sing is to love and to affirm, to fly and soar, to coast into the hearts of the people who listen, to tell them that life is to live, that love is there...that beauty exists, and must be hunted for and found."—from **Joan Baez's DAYBREAK** The journal of the girl who can turn the whole young world on with the strength of her beliefs and the quality of her voice.

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A LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE COMMUNIST PARTY
OF FRANCE FROM 5 WORKERS IN A FACTORY NEAR PARIS

June 10, 1968

Comrades,

We wish to inform you of our collective decision to resign from the Communist Party. . .

We realized, after an analysis of the positions of the Party, its inability to reflect positively the opinions of its base, its desire to oppose the union of workers and students and their aim to be adults and masters of their own destiny. To make ourselves clear, we reproach the Party leaders for not having exploited the great movement attacking bourgeoisie society which swept across our country, and of having turned away from this great spirit toward questions which dealt only with demands, certainly necessary, but insufficient.

The action of the Party has therefore consisted in channeling the action of workers away from their deep aspirations by a desire to negotiate at any cost with all levels of management, bypassing all these aspirations to achieve an illusory parliamentary success.

From our point of view, the conduct of the leaders of the CP has, from the beginning of the movement, failed to exploit in a revolutionary way the contradictions of capitalist society. They have deliberately slowed up and sabotaged (particularly from Friday May 24) each attempted progression of the movement which could have enabled them to open up a revolutionary perspective for the working man.

It is not necessary to detail, point by point, since the beginning of the movement, all the mistakes and inadequacies of the Party leaders which are made concrete by their objectively counter-revolutionary attitude. We shall underline the lack of a mass response after the speech of DeGaulle, and of more relevance to us, the confirmation of their policy to detour the objectives of general struggle by voluntarily abandoning their comrades at Flins who were faced with a police occupation of their factory, a policy already applied to students and teachers.

In all things it is necessary to know how to distinguish the effects (against which we fight) from the causes. From this point of view, we know the reasons that for a number of years have motivated the main line of Party politics and consequently that of the CGT. They constitute the background of these regrettable events.

We remain convinced that the Party is made up of conscious and devoted comrades from the working class as we think we ourselves are. And if we are led, as many other militants in France, to make this grave decision, it is after deep thought. Conscious of the fact that the cadre of the Party does not permit us to assume the responsibilities that we have towards the workers, we leave them to engage in action that now seems necessary to us.

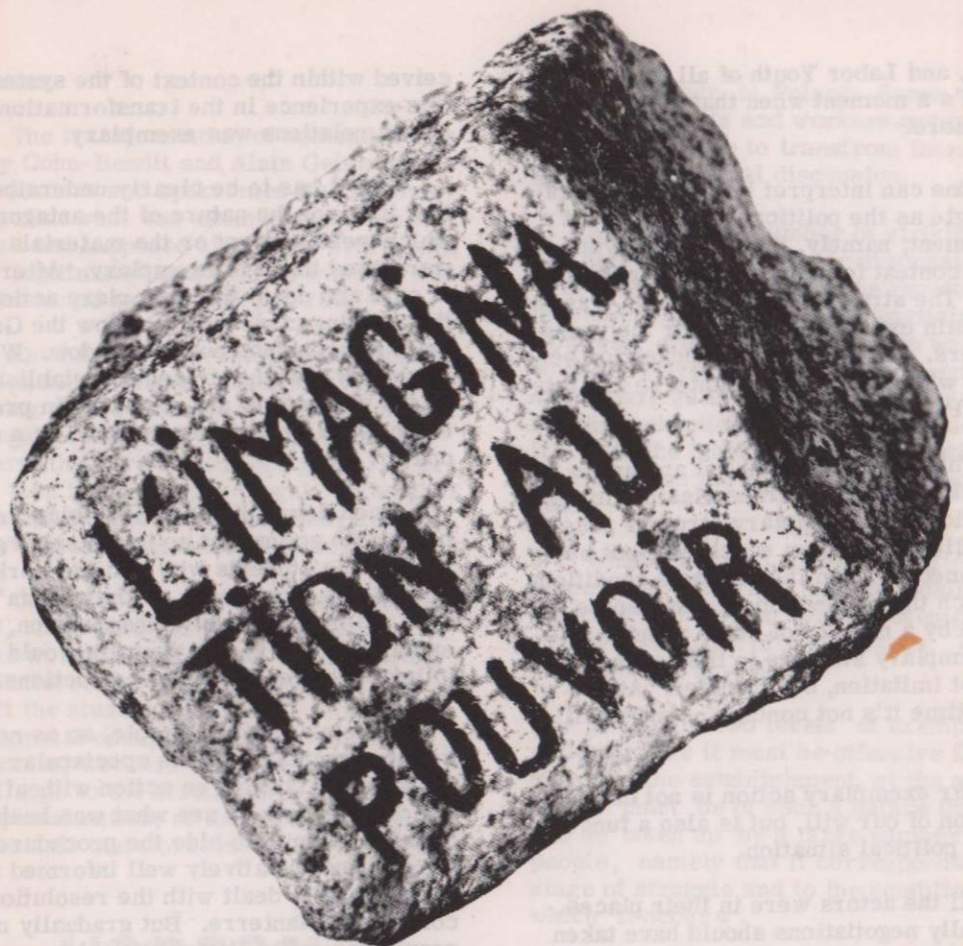
The responsibility of our resigning rests with the leaders of the Party and with those of the militants who are more attentive to the political line coming from the top than to the profound aspirations of the workers.

When the working class grasps an idea, it transforms it into an irresistible material force which nothing can stop. (Marx)

Saluts fraternels

ORGANISONS L'AUTODÉFENSE !
DESCO
CTION

VOUS VAINCREZ ! L'USINE OCCUPEE !



power to the imagination

WHAT IS AN

EXEMPLARY ACTION? II.

Ultimately, it's probably not the confrontation with the cops or with those in power that determines the exemplary character of a struggle, but rather the way in which the various mechanisms of self-defense (created by the National Student Union or voluntary services of order -- and leading to a self-imposed limitation of the movement) are cut-through and bypassed.

An action is exemplary in the sense that it definitively unveils the nature of the cops on the one hand, and shows a cer-

tain determination to fight on the other. The action shows that one wasn't protesting but rather holding on to the street, permanently, to affirm a will to power, to affirm certain goals; goals which were very concrete and were backed up by a real commitment.

What is exemplary is the struggle of the Vietnamese. It's not the fact that one yells at a demonstration, or the place one occupies; it's the fact that at a given moment a threshold is passed. We're a conglomeration of self-appointed cops, Cath-

olics, and Labor Youth of all types. And there's a moment when that doesn't work any more.

One can interpret it as: the value of a struggle as the political expression of a movement; namely, that it goes beyond the usual context for this type of demonstration. The struggle of the students was to a certain extent exemplary for the young workers. There's a clear connection between what happened in Nanterre and later in Paris.

This extension does not amount to mimicking; it is not transmission through imitation. An exemplary struggle poses the political problem which, without being disconnected from the concrete conditions in which things developed, can also be adopted by a number of other people. It's an exemplary struggle in the sense that it's not imitation, but transfer. At the same time it's not contagion, but clarification.

Our exemplary action is not only a question of our will, but is also a function of our political situation.

All the actors were in their places. Normally negotiations should have taken place: "you're there, we're here, we protest, you maintain order. . ." But that's where a bolt had been knocked out and something else appeared: this opening to the unknown which at that point became transferable. It is this action which transforms the power relations in a given case on a particular point, and that's why we see it as a fundamental, irreversible change.

The passage of the student struggles to the workers' struggles is a fundamental process of the entire evolution, and what happened would not have been important if this passage had not taken place: this is in fact at the level of completely spontaneous, rather than directly political, consciousness. Some workers came; they saw how an intervention in a certain style had made it possible to impose something on those in power; they saw that something was happening in the Latin Quarter, that there was a dual power which the bourgeoisie couldn't break.

For the workers, after 20 or 25 years of constant defeats, of concessions re-

ceived within the context of the system, this experience in the transformation of power relations was exemplary.

But it has to be clearly understood that it is not the nature of the antagonisms which were present or the materials which were used that are exemplary. After all is said and done, the exemplary action of the working class was to throw the Grenelle Agreements¹ out the window. We might say that the precedent established by the students of not marching in pre-established arrangements acted as a detonator.

Even Seguy² didn't see the blow coming and he got caught up in the same game. It's not the students who told the workers to turn this crap down. If there hadn't been a certain type of transgression, of exemplary action, the workers would have followed the federation's instructions.

Here's another example, so as not to remain fascinated by the spectacular side, the street. There's no action without reaction. We have to see what was hushed up in an attempt to hide the procedures. Assemblies, relatively well informed at the beginning, dealt with the resolutions concerning Nanterre. But gradually more people came; the little political groups coming to stay, attempted to co-opt the movement. This happened again and again.

Actions to stop this were exemplary, not because of the principle of returning to the rank and file which is a principle in all statutes of democratic action, but because of the fact that a movement had enough guts to stop all attempts at co-

¹ The May 27th issue of the French magazine Partisan has a description of these Agreements which were signed May 27th by the CGT (strong union of the working class); CFDT and FO (strong unions of the working class in reactionary Western France); and CNPF (the only union of the Management and Government). These agreements between the workers, the capitalists, and the government were expected to pass without any trouble.

² General Secretary of the CGT, who came to the Renault Factory after the agreements were signed to present them to the workers.

optation.

The transformation of comrades like Dany Cohn-Bendit and Alain Geismar into leaders and spokesmen was interesting. But what was exemplary action clarifies what happened afterward with Seguy, the "legitimate" spokesman, when he was contradicted by the rank and file.

Another type of exemplary action: the occupation of places. This idea was surprising and revolutionary in 1936. There is legal occupation, but if one wants outsiders (they are called foreigners) to enter, then it's no longer "legal." The CGT (General Confederation of Labor) refused to let the students into the factories.

Occupation of the University. Students said, "Non-students have to enter." But if the workers can go into the University of Nanterre, or into the Sorbonne, why can't the students go into the factories? Reciprocal occupation: students in the factories; workers in the university, a challenge to the strictures of cloistering, of specialization, of the separation of intellectuals and workers.

L'ODÉON OCCUPÉ

The taking of the Odeon is interesting in this context. During a general assembly at Nanterre, it was proposed by a number of ex-artists, by students and by workers. We decided to take a place which would be symbolic and which would politically screw up the establishment's cultural image abroad and in France.

It was proposed that the theater be run by everyone, not by the actors or anything like that: but by the public who came to the theater to discuss culture if it wanted to. Turn it into a dormitory or an eating hall. There was no reason for the theater to remain a theater.

The exemplary nature of this act was politically demonstrated by the fact of its spreading all around abroad, in New York, in California, and even in a little

theater in Lodz, in Poland. Some young actors, students and workers occupied places of culture to transform them into places for political discussion.

An enormous number of striking workers came to the Odeon for discussions with students, to discuss the revolutionary movement and eventually to participate. However, even though the Odeon was open, workers stayed outside. Many people didn't dare go in because of their respect for the institution and their alienation from it. Thus the most interesting meetings took place on the square in front, not inside.

What occurred at Sud-Aviation and some other factories, namely locking the director into a room was an exemplary action on the part of the workers. We've never locked anyone in!

There are two levels of exemplary action: while it must be offensive in nature, opposing the establishment, at the same time it must be of such a nature that it can be taken up by a large number of people, namely that it corresponds to a stage of struggle and to the conditions in which it occurs.

An exemplary action took place at an electronics company at Brest, where the workers ran the factory; they made it function. How doesn't matter. It wasn't a question of production as such, but of producing certain electronic instruments for the struggle.

It would be hard for a sufficiently large number of people to do likewise if the level of the struggle isn't adequately developed. There is a risk of moving toward vanguardist-type actions, functioning for a largely theoretical analysis of the event, but what we are calling exemplary actions are those which occur spontaneously, becoming exemplary afterwards. Only then are they reflected upon and analyzed theoretically.

The level of the political actions at the beginning, before May, was so low that the March 22 Movement hoped for nothing more than a series of exemplary actions, all on the same problem, the problem of the repressive structure of the bourgeois state. The initial analysis was correct but elemen-

tary: we don't live in a state of freedom, but under the dictatorship of a social class. From that point on, the simple progressive development of this revolutionary movement which contested the capitalist order and could not compromise with it, systematically unveiled the repressive structure of the system. The simple affirmation of oneself, of what one did every day, was already an exemplary action. Thus the political analysis was completely elementary and is not equal, for example, to an internal analysis of facts, or a precise report of a situation where one gets to the point of starting to do something. We had a really rough analysis which at that level could not be assimilated. This came from the simple will to survive, and the capacity to continue developing was a daily affirmation.

The exemplary actions of the March 22 Movement are not actions related to symbolic points. In the last analysis even the Odeon isn't symbolic; it's something concrete. It is political, while the Bourse (stock exchange - see section I. for a description of this event) as an objective of the demonstration at the Gare de Lyon was completely symbolic.

We expected the fight to be generalized all over the right bank, with a certain number of objectives, to prove that the police could be beaten. That was the main objective, and some police headquarters were the secondary objective. This would have been the logical consequence of a situation; in other words, you go out in the street towards an objective, and the capture of that objective would mean the total decay of the repressive structure of the police. The very fact that there was shit all over Paris, especially on the right bank, with hundreds of barricades and thousands of guys walking around the street armed, holding paving stones, who built barricades wherever they wanted to make them, no matter where or how--that was very significant and very exemplary. The demonstration was not an exemplary action when it retreated to the Latin Quarter.

...there are some people in Paris, some petits bourgeois, who were shocked by the fact that trees were cut for barricades, that cars were blown up on the barricades: these are the reflexes of the consumers' society. The fact that skulls

are split, arms broken, that people get massacred by the C.R.S. (riot police), that's not important. What matters are the trees, the cars, the consumer goods...

An analysis could be made of the counter-revolutionary role of the UNEF. For example, two or three times when barricades were being built and cars were being used to consolidate them, some UNEF guys came behind us to take the cars and carry them back, telling us, "These could be workers' cars!" This meant that you don't touch consumer goods because they are sacred. You don't touch the walls of the Odeon, let alone the walls of the Sorbonne.

For some, the barricade could have had a romantic significance. That's not of value. What's essential is the objective, the real affirmation of the fight against the cops; in other words we no longer had a passive role in the face of repression, but an active role, which was proven not only by the fact that people didn't back up but attacked, but also by the construction itself.

However, the construction of the barricades and their defense is no longer exemplary, but the fact that this was a collective action where everyone worked; this was proof of extraordinary imagination and was much more important than the actual efficacy of the barricades themselves, which weren't too great for defense. The barricades, which at one time were exemplary actions, have become an increasingly non-exemplary form of action.

If exemplary action is defined in a completely concrete manner, in terms of an act and not in terms of a situation, one risks falling into mythology. When it is no longer enough to prove that there is a power other than that of the bourgeois state in the streets and it is necessary to advance toward complete destruction of the power of the bourgeois state, the barricades, strictly defensive instruments of the demonstrators against the charges of the police forces and not offensive instruments for the destruction of the bourgeois state, start to become part of folklore and no longer acts of a political, revolutionary, exemplary type.

Even if one thinks about self-defense, which can be called an exemplary action,

it isn't necessarily that self-defense in itself is effectively exemplary. It all depends on what the self-defense will give birth to. If the self-defense can lead to armed self-defense, then it is exemplary. One can build barricades. That doesn't mean they'll exist as barricades. It's not the barricade itself that's exemplary, but what it reveals.

There's a difference between an exemplary action and a guiding principle. The only thing one can do after acquiring experience in an action which turned out to be exemplary in terms of the relation of forces, is to try to throw out some guidelines. Self-defense at the right time is a guideline, and no longer an exemplary action.

The difference between the present situation and the beginning of the events on the barricades, is that now guidelines are thrown out with an exemplary action in view, referring to what's already been done. They are used with the aim of holding on to certain political perspectives, whereas until now, whatever happened was never held on to. Actions were launched which created a different atmosphere, one which perhaps couldn't be foreseen, and which couldn't be maintained. That's probably why the problem of organization comes up at this time, namely because actions with ulterior political aims are set off.

It is now customary to prepare an action project behind a guideline, not to throw out guidelines just like that, not to start an action by saying, "We'll see what happens; it'll probably work." It's time for something else.

Until now we groped in the dark. But above all we acted. And this corresponded to the phases of the struggle's development. The first phase was concerned with developing a movement incompatible with the system and the bourgeois order; this is very primitive and there was no need to develop a strategy. Today the problems are of a completely different nature. It is no longer possible to grope from one day to the next.

The difference between the action of the March 22 Movement and that of a revolutionary movement is that the 22 has no political program and no political planning for the future. It only has an analysis of

what can be expected three or four days ahead, and it has projects which are directly related to this analysis for the coming week and for very concrete situations. Even the problem of selection does not come up; we used to solve things from one day to the next, without really thinking about them; we discussed, we had a certain atmosphere in common, and then we acted. That's all.

Is that valid, or does the March 22 Movement only give birth to reactions among the students? Why? How? Can it give birth to reactions outside the University? Why should separations be made? Either one does things which are exemplary, i. e., for everyone, or else they aren't exemplary at all.

This is why the problem of organization comes up: we no longer do exemplary actions because the margin of action is very small. What are we to do today! All that's left is the naked repressive system of the bourgeois power. The exemplary action of today is to destroy the bourgeois power. This type of action would be exemplary, but can this be defined in advance? Furthermore, can one dream about defining the destruction of this power?

This is the level at which the need for organization has to be seen.

What was done these last days was to give active support to the occupation of the factories and to the continuation of the strike. That's not an exemplary action for the time being, since so far there's been no more than the formation of tough nuclei--that's the guideline--of resisters against the general retreat of the union bureaucracies and the parties integrated within the system and against the repressive bourgeois system.

Some days after it's done we'll be able to see if it was an exemplary action, namely if the fact that there are some irreducible bastions in the working class sets off and re-launches the revolutionary process which developed until now, or if it remains adventurism. If Renault and Citroen hold on until the end, if they resist or attack, even if they are isolated; if the universities hold on and defend themselves with blows of Molotov cocktails against the fascist attacks; and if this leads

to a continuation of the process and leads to general insurrection against capitalism, then this will have been the last exemplary action.

If this action does not take place, if all these bastions are eliminated, if all the vanguard militants are decimated, then this will have been adventurism.

It will be exemplary action if the revolutionary process starts up again on the basis of the guideline of self-defense.

Exemplary action in the last analysis is violence. Not indiscriminate violence, but there is violence in the action. We realized during these last ten days, consciously or unconsciously, in confronting the society at large, that a lot of people thought that violence could be minimized, namely that the occupation of the factories could simply lead to a dual power, and to direct selfmanagement of the factories. That is not possible; only a certain violence can explode the barriers at all levels, specifically at the level of the mind and at the level of society, inside the factories and inside production; so long as these barriers remain, they will be the obstacles.

And self-defense? It's experiencing violence. Continuation of the revolutionary movement is through violence, self-defense. Self-defense isn't merely protection; it is protection against and attack.

Occupation of the factories. This was the bridge which was burned by the most extreme action of the 1936 struggles. Things started up at the furthest point they'd reached in 1936. But the means of going beyond this point were not found.

The factory occupations were an object for negotiation. That's the way the workers lived it: "We won't leave the factories until we get . . ." The students did more than occupy; inside they started to install forms of selfmanagement.

If we had made an exemplary action out of the occupation of the University: suppression of the hierarchy, attempts to destroy the established power or to overthrow it completely. If one had shown that, publicized it, maybe some ideas would have appeared. But it could all start up again. If at Renault or elsewhere they fight against the C.R.S. and really defend themselves all

the way, then the fight is won.

That is self-defense, and it should be understood that the best self-defense is self-organization. Since power had been conquered by the Paris Commune, they had to run their own schools, their industries, and so on. They were obliged to do that because of the position they were in. They didn't have to wait for the Government to give way on certain points, or to do what it should: discuss the way it was supposed to.

At B.H.V. (Bazaar de l'Hôtel de Ville - selling a variety of merchandise, especially tools and hardware) they tried to put forward some demands. But who did they present them to? To those in power! They don't do it for themselves; they wait for someone to answer.

Verbally and physically we were led to build barricades because we had put up certain conditions and barricades were needed to realize them. Should the workers have built theirs?

Five years ago we wrote a study at the UNEF on teacher-student relations, on criticism and challenge. Finally some actions of a certain type took place which made it possible not to treat the problem like that any more. When the comrades occupied the Sorbonne, they no longer talked about the teacher-student relationship. They exploded it!

Is there any way that we, in the present situation, could transform a list of demands into the creative acts of a second power? Can we, students or revolutionary militants, adopt the list of demands of a B.H.V. and thus move toward their realization in today's society--an autonomous power whose demands are applied exclusively by those who work in the B.H.V.

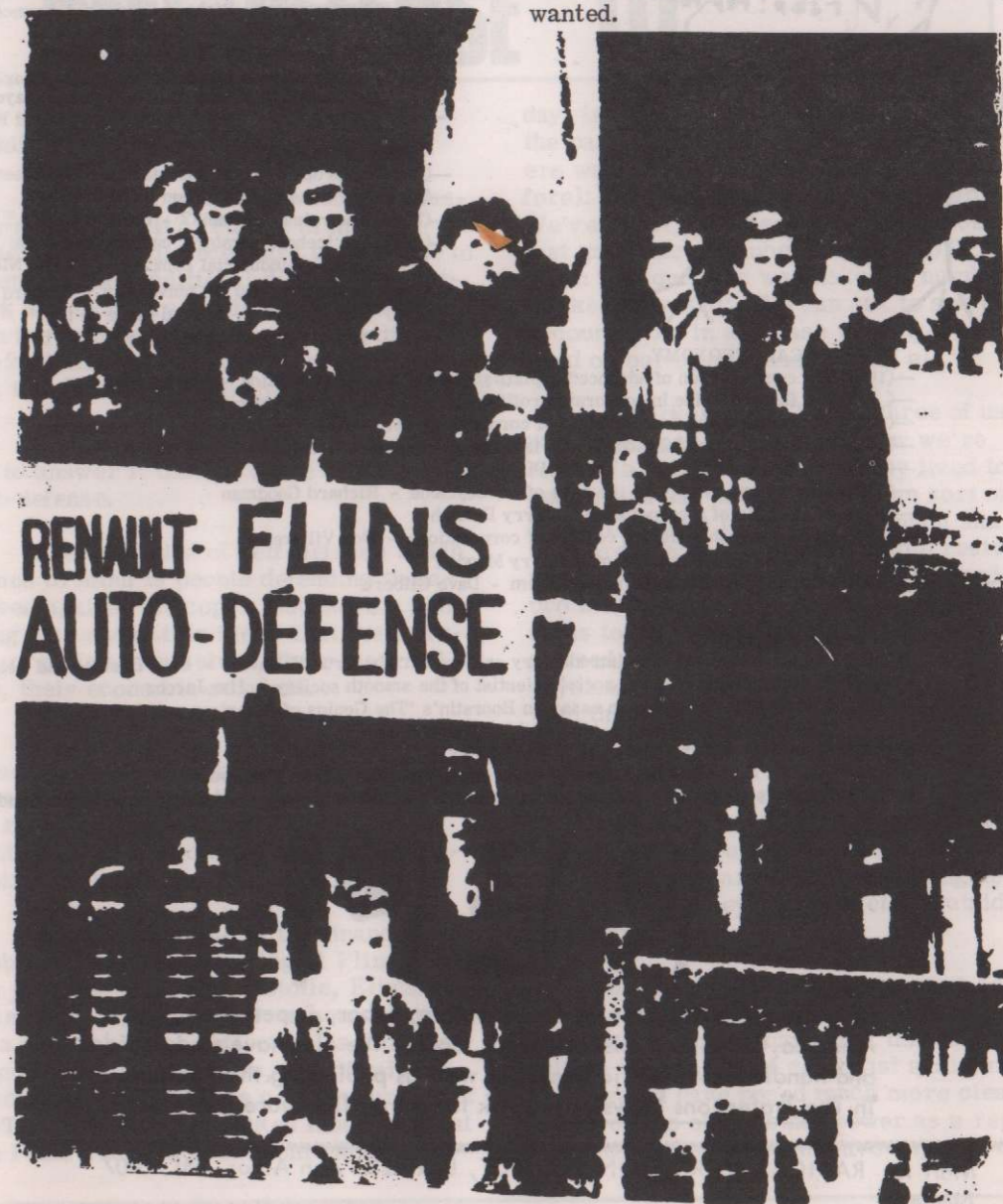
The Paris Commune was not a revolutionary power from the start. It became a revolutionary power when pushed by events. Denunciation of the police system inside the B.H.V. by the employees themselves is already a first step.

We can also refer to the lists of complaints in the French bourgeois Revolution of 1789. That politicized the masses. Everyone came with a list of de-

mands. The very fact of putting them down on paper and claiming them already posed the problem of power.

The problem today is to create con-

ditions in which people will become conscious of what they say. Until now this has been done in action. It's in the places where they acted that people became conscious of what they said, and of what they wanted.



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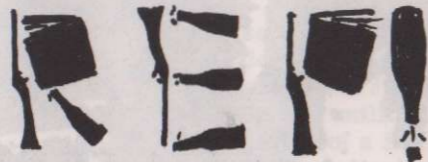
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SELF-MANAGEMENT AND DEFENSE III.

The development of the strike led rapidly to the posing of other questions.

How was it possible to occupy a factory and to hold it? Purely in material terms, was it necessary to continue to depend on the traditional distribution network and to intervene directly, starting with the practical problem of food distribution? Could the channels be created so that the producers could be reached directly?

It's by asking this question and by trying to answer it that we came to the idea of self-defense.

The first idea of self-defense which comes to mind is people defending themselves against the cops. But there's something else under this idea: that the workers organize themselves, their material life, their economic survival.

Today at Flins¹ workers are asking these questions in a different way: from here--they're not in the factory--how can we reoccupy the factory? how can we fight the cops? and thus, how can we organize ourselves for this purpose?

Another example is the financial problem. During a meeting at Flins Friday morning (Place de l'Etoile, Elisabethville, June 7), the C.G.T. announced that as a witness of the "effective" solidarity of metallurgical workers, and of miners (who remember 1933), a certain number of CGT unions had contributed money so that the Flins workers could hold on. Yester-

day, in the discussion which took place in the park at the Château des Mureaux, workers wanted to know (they'd never asked before): "This money, where does it go? We've never even seen its color. Does it just go to the members of the CGT?" When this question was asked, a number of workers reacted: "We can ask to see their accounts, but in any case we've got to depend on our own forces first of all."

A worker said, "Look, three of us put our money together and now we're leading a collective life." They lived together and had established some sort of a budget: "that's for food, that much and no more; we've got to make some restrictions about a number of consumer goods; two meals a day with a 'plat de résistance,' so as to be able to hold on." And they explained, "If you don't eat, you can't hold on physically on the picket lines, in the fights with the cops," and so on.

The comrade continued (it wasn't yet on the level of the community in general)--"Let's face facts. What's important is that you hold on. You can't count on the organizations, which are far from helping us; on the contrary, they're completely outside our movement."

If this type of solution became collective it would have been an embryo of power (obviously provisional). But this is still within the context of capitalist structures. This would have posed much more clearly the problem of the state power as a repressive force, and it would have exposed the

¹ June 9th. It should be remembered that on Thursday, June 6th, 4000 C.R.S. chased the strike pickets out of the Renault factory so as to allow "the liberty of work to be practiced." On June 7th the strike pickets, reinforced by students, had stopped the hand-

ful of workers and supervisors who had been called back to work by the government's propaganda. From Friday to Monday the repression grows until the whole region is transformed into a prohibited zone. On Monday, a 17 year old high school student, Gilles Tautin, is drowned by cops near Meulan.

role of the CGT as an obstacle to the strike much better than verbal denunciations.

Self-management and self-defense: provisional self-management for the problem of food, and self-defense which means the ability of the workers to defend themselves against the intervention of the cops. This would effectively have opposed the CGT, which said two days ago at Flins: "We'll have an interview with one of the managers of the factory to ask him to please have the cops called off."

For us it wasn't a question of organizing the food distribution instead of the guys inside the factories; that would have meant substituting ourselves for the CGT, in other words becoming a party of the same type and just as bureaucratic.

What we tried to do when we took the initiative was to show that it was possible: in other words, another exemplary action. The work consisted solely in getting into contact with peasants in Bretagne or elsewhere, and telling them: "This is what we've done; this is what's possible," and then letting the guys in the factories face the problem. There was never a question that the militants of the March 22 Movement would take on a charitable action toward the workers, to take them food or money; it was simply a question of showing that it was possible to move in a certain direction.

The means existed. But they didn't subvert the established power.

For example, what happened at factory H: We were in contact with peasants in a provincial department not far from Paris, and were organizing a collection of rabbits, chickens and eggs. We knew very well that if we'd asked the CGT or its strike committee to do something, they wouldn't have done anything; so one morning we arrived with a load of products which were sold at production price, the way it had been done at Nantes. What happened? The CGT turned down the merchandise, explaining that the rabbits couldn't be cooked, that the Factory Committee wasn't equipped for that; but sure, they'd talk about it; there would be a "large political discussion" which in the afternoon was reduced to a meeting with three or four bureaucrats, and out of which nothing came.

This is the essential problem: so long

as there's no group of workers inside the factory who can take charge of such an action, no matter whose good will is in question or who initiated the action, such actions will fail because the union machine is going to cut the whole thing short. It's easy to imagine the most marvelous schemes in which an important factory directly contacts the farmers of a region so as to buy their products cheaply; but the problem is to find out whether or not these initiatives will take hold, and what can follow them. In the case which was mentioned, the thing had little political significance: the peasants hadn't come to sell their products, since in any case they could have sold them to cooperatives at the same price; they had come to express their political solidarity, and it would have been important and interesting to talk to them. This wasn't done, and they left disappointed.

Tons of chickens and tons of potatoes got into the factories; the Factory Committees bought them or got them for their can-tees; but this passed completely above the heads of the workers, who didn't grasp its significance at all. In what we did, all they saw was that we were selling eggs at 15 centimes instead of 30 or 28, and they said, "That's a good buy" and bought ten dozen. They didn't see the political significance of it at all. The peasant talked for ten minutes with the workers who were outside, but since this wasn't taken up by anyone inside the factory, it was just an empty discussion.

In factories where such a nucleus of workers existed, the workers took trucks and visited other factories in the neighborhood. By contacting comrades organized inside the factories, they were able to contact not only the Factory Committees, but the other guys, who weren't necessarily on the CGT's strike committee, and they told them "Look at what we've done, what you can get, what it's possible to do."

When it was possible for us to get around existing institutions by means of an intermediary inside the factory who could make it possible for us to speak to other workers, a dialogue began.

In commissions composed of workers from such nuclei, comrades from different factories in the Paris region were in contact with each other. For example, at Hispano Suiza there were workers who had taken part in meetings on self-man-

agement held in Nanterre. March 22 acted as a catalyst here, but it was as if they weren't really present.

There the discussion began at a very elementary level, namely with immediate self-management of the enterprise. Obviously some participants pointed out: "But the self-management of one factory makes no sense unless you talk of the entire capitalist system." But that didn't take. This was a preliminary hypothesis. Self-management could not work in one enterprise, while the rest of the capitalist system remained intact. Then something else was taken up, and that was the technical problem; in other words, it was asked if the workers were capable, did they have the technical competence necessary to make the factory run?

Some workers spoke about the preliminary requirement, and maybe this is what differentiates self-management understood in a revolutionary context from a reformist position. What's needed for complete self-management is the formation of revolutionary workers' councils. Namely workers' councils which eliminate all distinctions within themselves, which eliminate all the hierarchical systems from the unions and the parties so as to develop a new form of creativity. On this creative basis the problem of competence becomes completely secondary since new forms of management can be constantly reinvented, as well as new forms of relations among the workshops, new forms of questioning whether this or that sector of the factory duplicates the work of another or whether

a particular hierarchical organ serves a useful function. In short, it's a capacity to dissolve all structures, and constantly to replace the structures of the factory.

That's the basic idea, namely that the problem of technical competence is a false problem because it's posed within the context of capitalist structures.

As soon as there's an organ which can dissolve the structures of the factory, competence becomes a completely secondary problem for the workers' councils. That was the first point.

The second point, a corollary, was that the self-management of the factory could not be carried out with the unions. There's no doubt about this. The unions, and even the party, are workers' organizations, or rather organizations which represent workers; but in terms of their role, these institutions have an established function within capitalist society, the function of representing and co-opting the proletariat. "Power to the workers" is immediately translated by the CGT into "Power to the Union."

That's why the participants in these commissions were very violent at the meetings, even though they might all have been members of the CGT. "Who should be locked out?" Not so much the owners, they said, but the union officials who cut everything, absolutely everything, short. During this period the union officials' main function was to be bureaucrats who wiped out all possible activity by the workers,

continued page 36 . . .

June 7

Tribune of March 22

Flins,¹ 1:30 a.m.:

On the highway after the tunnel, about a hundred comrades were arrested by the cops for an "identity check" at Beaujon.

4:00 a.m.:

About 30 workers and 20 students in two buses came to reinforce the strike picket.

5:00 a.m.:

When we arrived at Flins at 5 a.m. there were only about thirty workers around, members of the C.G.T., but doing what they could to stop the return to work. The strikers and the students explained to workers in cars that they shouldn't let themselves be intoxicated by the radio; that Flins wouldn't start work if the workers didn't start; that if the struggle continued at Renault, the strike could continue elsewhere as well.

Most of the workers have left their cars and joined the workers and students already engaged against the return to work, and even some of the workers who'd already gone into the factory have come out, realizing that the information

about the return to work given out by the press had been false.

So thanks to the strikers and to their student comrades, the government operation failed. There's been no return to work at Flins.

To everyone who was there, and particularly to the workers of Flins, it's obvious that it's not the unions who are responsible for this victory but the young workers and the students.

8:00 a.m.:

The diversionary meeting organized at 8 a.m. by the C.G.T. (General Confederation of Labor) and the C.F.D.T. (French Democratic Federation of Labor) at Place des Mureaux was only attended by 50 delegates. For the workers the struggle is in the factory, not 6 kilometers away. So the union delegates were forced to move the meeting closer to the factory, at the Place de l'Etoile at Elisabethville. Here there were between 2000 and 3000 participants. Speeches of the union representatives: Don't fall for provocations, etc. We have to meet this afternoon to discuss a unified demonstration on Monday. Demonstration Friday afternoon in front of the seat of Renault? Same guidelines: don't give in to provocation, disperse, join the comrades around the cops, around the factories, and occupy the area. (There are thousands of cops; two helicopters land and take off again from the driveways inside the factory and constantly fly over the meeting.)

The union representatives were forced by the rank and file to recognize publicly the role of the students. The workers insisted on letting students speak at the meeting. A March 22 comrade makes a speech: We students haven't come to give lessons to the working class, he repeats. We came to show our complete solidarity. A lot of noise. A union responsible takes the microphone back: Comrades, the meeting is over, disperse. Cries: Geismar/ of the Professor's union/, let Geismar speak! From the crowd: Be democratic, let him speak. Geismar takes the microphone: we haven't come to give you lessons. We're with you for concrete solidarity; you're fighting as many students are fighting to subvert the capitalist regime. We, the students who've shown that it was possible to make the C.R.S. retreat, we're with you when you reoccupy your factories for solidarity strikes. A young Flins worker proposed organizing the occupation in front of the factory, with food, dormitories, etc., to force the C.R.S. to get out of the factory. At Commerce Boulevard he attracted a group of comrades to discuss organization and exploitation. This group was attacked by the police, who threw a large series of offensive grenades. A grenade exploded at the corner of a building. Almost uninterrupted grenade explosions from 10:30 to 11:00. Some C.G.T. responsables: Comrades, we'll send a delegation; no violence; "one answers a provocation with a peaceful demonstration."

Charges and grenades: the responsables run away. A man is brought in, complete with Legion of Honor ribbon; he's the mayor of Les Mureaux, he'll try to intervene. Charge. He runs away with the others. During half an hour about ten people are injured. Suddenly the workers and students start organizing to retaliate.

Preparatory work had already been done for preventive purposes by the Flins workers during earlier meeting with students. Now the workers yell "C.R.S. = S.S." and try to get to the places where there's fighting. The helicopters continue to fly above, and they denounce the movements of the crowd. Some comrades return with helmets, but the majority of people don't have anything. There are discussions with the responsables of the Communist Party and the C.G.T., who talk about regional solidarity with the workers of Poissy, but they don't talk about a larger movement. We must negotiate. But the owners don't want to negotiate, people tell them. The police tried unsuccessfully to isolate the workers from the students, thinking it could count on the pacifism of the CGT. But the union, which tried to organize chains between workers and students on one side and between workers and the C.R.S. on the other side in order to stop workers from retaliating against the gas grenades, is no longer organized as their defense organ. "They defend us, but from far away," say the Flins workers.

The Mobile Guards (police) threw an offensive grenade into the dining room of an apartment seriously injuring two people. Seeing this, a doctor went to the local police headquarters to ask that the children of the neighboring buildings be allowed

to find refuge elsewhere. The police chief asked for his papers and told him to leave.

11:00 a.m.:

The so-called negotiations begin. The workers talk to the students during the calm. It's now clear to the workers that the cops are the provocators. Elsewhere, with the end of the strike in certain sectors, those who started the struggle are now victims of repression.

11:30 a.m.:

While the negotiations are going on, the cops charge in all the streets.

Now the cops systematically occupy a mile wide region by blocking off streets and keeping patrols on every corner.

The road which leads from the highway is closed up by the Republican Mobile Guards, armed with muskets. At the exit from the highway, at Porte de Saint-Cloud, the C. R.S. armed with machine guns stop cars which are spotted by helicopters, search the occupants and check their papers. At the entrance to the post office there are about fifty empty cars; the C.R.S. officer explains that the occupants were stopped for an "identity check."

The cops harrass the strikers and the students all afternoon. A large number are taken to the Commissariat of Melun.

At the Boulogne-Billancourt factory, the union delegates got their instructions and information and they completely deformed the truth.

--They claimed that the meeting had been organized by the UNEF, whereas it had been completely prepared by the unions, the CGT and the CFDT.

--According to them, only the students retaliated to the provocations of the C.R.S., while the grenades exploded among workers.

--They claimed that the workers were not in the demonstration, but formed a chain between the C.R.S. and the students.

--The union delegates take lightly the struggle of their comrades who are paying with their bodies to reoccupy the factory.

*

Yesterday at Flins the C.R.S. threw the strikers out of the Renault factory. Last night, starting at 5 a.m., about 400 people who were going to Flins to demonstrate in support of the striking workers were arrested on the Ouest Highway. All the roads leading to Flins were blocked by the police.

This morning, about 10:30, the police once again used violence against the workers. The workers, joined by students, demonstrated in the streets of the town; the police used teargas grenades and offensive grenades; they even threw them into apartments. Numerous injured people were transported to the hospital.

What does this mean?

The newspapers talk in large letters about the return to work. The French Radio and Television Office, held by the cops, does not mention the violence unleashed against the workers.

By applying this stick and carrot on a stick policy, those in power have one aim: --with the carrot they want to make work start up slowly, sector by sector, isolating the most combative sectors, like metallurgy.

--to profit from this isolation, applying the policy of the stick at places like Flins, French Radio and Television, at Citroen, and "organizing" the return to work with cops and grenades.

* Those in power want to break all resistance and to lead the population to the dead end of elections and parliamentarism.

* The resistance of the workers of Flins concerns everyone. By retaliating against the C.R.S., they too refuse the dead ends the government wants to impose on everyone.

* Let's denounce the lies of the Radio-Television Office.

* Let's reinforce the resistance of the factories which want to continue the strike.

* Let's answer the call of the Billancourt strikers: "It's necessary to reinforce the strike but also to go out in the street."

EVERYONE, THIS EVENING AT 7:00 P.M. AT GARE ST. LAZARE.

and who tried to stop the formation of any committees, whether workshop committees or autonomous discussion committees. All they wanted was pseudo-meetings which took place at 10 in the morning inside the factory, and where the union leaders stand up in front, summarize the situation, and then say, "We'll continue striking" -- meetings at which it was obvious that no one else could speak, especially if he wanted to talk about continuing the strike.

Self-management is first of all some experiences which workers had during the past forty or fifty years: the soviets, the workers' councils, what happened in Spain in 1936 and '38, which is related to what happened in Hungary. There were always two attitudes: the conception of soviets which are composed of the workers themselves, who create and organize them with very precise, determined and global aims, and the Leninist conception of the organization of the proletariat, namely the conception of the party.

Immediately there appeared a dichotomy between the autonomous organization of the proletariat, and on the other side another organization which also considered itself of the proletariat but which is actually the creation of intellectuals: the party. This dichotomy can already be found in Marx's analysis when trade-unions were created. In other words, there have always been two conceptions. But today there's only one conception, the one that won: the managerial conception. Yet this conception has hardly succeeded. As Marx would say, in socialist societies bourgeois right continues to exist during a certain period among the revolutionaries themselves. This deceptive conception continues to be current among revolutionaries today. It leads right back to the bourgeois conception of executives and executors.

Thus there's a trap here, between these two conceptions, a non-directive conception and a directive conception.

As for the forms of organization of the proletariat, it seems that there wouldn't be spontaneity as such there. Spontaneity is a movement which allows the proletariat to develop its own forms of organization. It's not a question of socialist society remaining perpetually in a state of spontaneity, even in a revolutionary period; spontaneity as

such is nothing but a moment of agitation.

Spontaneity is what permits the simultaneous destruction of the old context and the creation of the form of organization appropriate to the proletariat. That's where the real power of expression resides, and spontaneity is transitory.

A form of organization is not a concrete problem; it is always transitory. In a socialist society, self-management will be the most complete and most coherent form of organization over a long period. But it's absolutely aberrant to say that self-management will be the form of organization of a socialist society, that socialism consists of self-management, or that self-management means socialism.

This means that the only thing we know about typically working class organizations facing revolutionary problems is that they've always tended to resolve certain problems of production the same way, through workers' councils, and this has always taken the form of self-management. Thus self-management means the management of oneself and of everything one touches, not in an individualistic but in a collective sense; namely, a collective "we" wrapped up with oneself makes the decisions.

Self-management does not mean a certain number of individuals who want to manage on their own and who create the forms for that; it's the community which wants to manage itself; here the individual no longer has a real role.

It should be recognized that the initiatives which were born in the factories where we worked were obviously not spontaneous. This is an absolutely fundamental theoretical, historical-theoretical problem. It is well known that the Bolsheviks did not create the soviets (councils). These were created independently of the Bolsheviks. At that time saying "all power to the soviets" did not mean defending the positions of the Bolsheviks. But the Bolsheviks understood that the soviets were the embryo of an autonomous power of the proletariat, the counter-power to all possible systems of bourgeois institutions.

Unfortunately we cannot say that the period we've just experienced showed a flowering of workers' councils inside

the factories.

The situation was precisely the opposite: an organization exists which is theoretically the organization of the working class--the Communist Party--and this party did everything it could precisely to prevent the creation of the autonomous power of the working class.

This is the basic difference between now and the soviet period. This presents a problem which is historically new, even though it might be considered that the German Social Democrats met the same problem after 1917, since in Germany too there existed a political apparatus for co-opting and putting pressure on the proletariat within the context of the bourgeois system.

It's obvious that today, even if a spontaneous growth of workers' councils had been possible, a machine ready to crush them existed. That's precisely what we experienced at Hispano: a long period of time was spent just in order to find a place for discussions that were not about union demands. The bureaucrats laid traps for us immediately by asking us what we wanted, and we said: "We haven't come with any guidelines." That was no tactic at all. We were convinced that only such a council could imagine the type of organization and particularly the political line which the workers could adopt.

As soon as the bureaucrats understood this, they intervened at the second meeting and forced us to talk about a "common program" and crap like that. So that when the workers expressed a series of truths like, "You don't negotiate with Pompidou" and "We should demonstrate," they were completely put down by the bureaucrats. And all possibility of expression disappeared.

It all remained at a formal level; it was the embryo of something new, but to the extent that the committees were the result of a compromise with the union officials they didn't work at all, that's obvious. We don't know what kind of discussion might have developed there, but it's obvious that the commissions could only be constituted as a political opposition against the union machine.

At Nantes, where things went much further, there's a strike committee formed

by the different unions which apparently replaces the legal administration at the city hall; however, this strike committee can only solve certain problems definitively, let's say partial problems. Even at the level of food or of actions led by the workers themselves, for example the control of all roads which lead to Nantes, the issuing of passes or gas coupons or food coupons, these actions don't have the significance we might be tempted to give them, namely that the workers have taken charge of the city's administration and all the problems that that poses. The actions are more like some kind of display prepared by the different unions and are due to the existence at Nantes of a very specific current which consists of the Nantes Workers' Force held by anarchists and by some Trotskyists of the Lambert group.

It seems that the strike committee acquired the appearance of a second power under the pressure of this Workers' Force. The strike committee says that students took charge of most things. For example, they created some sort of market in the university itself, inviting peasants from the region and putting them in contact with the workers. When they have demands they go to the City Hall, namely in front of the strike committee; but ultimately they address the strike committee the same way they used to address the Mayor. In other words there's a strike committee which functions at the top; but all that has been seen elsewhere.

Fundamentally there's simply been an agreement between the different bureaucracies; there was a minimal agreement to keep things going. But there's hardly any participation by non-unionized people, and there are no elections. Our comrades there face exactly the same problem we do, namely the problem of breaking the union so that the workers can take power, but they haven't succeeded, even though apparently at Nantes things are better: people are conscious of the problem.

In this context, something important is happening in Flins: a parallel structure is in the process of being created:

---on the one hand there's the strike committee and the CGT-CFDT group which tries to keep control over it;

---on the other hand there are workers organized in the UJCM (Union of Marxist-Leninist Communist Youth), due

to the fact that some of the guys in this group went to work in the factory a few months ago and formed what they call a "Proletarian CGT." This group parallels the traditional institutions, and is trying to call for the self-defense of the factory. Thus there are three different powers among the workers:

1. the traditional union and inter-union structures;
2. the strike committee;
3. this informal type of organization composed of militants who are concentrating on a precise task and who compete with the other powers.

These three forms manifest themselves in the following ways:

--on one side is the management of the factory;

-- in the middle there's the inter-union committee, which fluctuates; it negotiates with management but must take account of the other side --"pressure from the rank and file"--which is already more or less organized.

--on the other side some real work is accomplished.

It's the pickets who dissuaded the workers who wanted to go back to work.

The first attempt of the workers to reoccupy the factory failed, but this was a beginning, a start in harrasing the forces of order, and it was a two-pronged action: on the one hand it included the non-unionized workers, and on the other hand those who had come from elsewhere because these workers had sent out an appeal.

A problem which might be called historically a new problem has to be treated; this has to do with Leninism, namely with the relations between the vanguard and the masses. There has been a sort of restoration of the character and truth of spontaneity. According to the Leninist schema, spontaneity consists merely of trade-union demands, etc.; a step beyond this has to be taken, a step which breaks with this spontaneity, in order to engage the workers in the revolutionary process; and only the Bolshevik vanguard is able to give a revolutionary character to this step.

Thus one can see that Lenin did well to break with spontaneity, and to create an

institution, a revolutionary organization which would be able to take this step. Today the opposite has to take place. It's a paradox that today it is the Communist Party and the CGT that correspond to the Leninist spontaneity, whereas Lenin's revolutionary vanguard is precisely the unorganized which is located on the margin of the entire system.

Thus we see a complete reversal of the Leninist problem. For us the cleavage exists, for example, between us and the JCR (Revolutionary Communist Youth) as we saw it behave at the general assembly of action committees. The JCR is still impregnated with the vanguard/mass organization schema, mass organization being defined as spontaneity within the context of bourgeois society, and the vanguard on the contrary as the element which challenges bourgeois society.

Here again precisely the opposite takes place: it's precisely the vanguard, or the so-called vanguard, which tends to be co-opted (and to an ever greater extent when it thinks it lost; after De Gaulle's speech of May 30 they were saying, "Cool it! Cool it! Cool it!") The vanguard represents the integration of revolutionaries within bourgeois society, whereas on the contrary the spontaneity that has manifested itself is precisely the element which contests bourgeois society.

So what's the problem? What should we fight about? Maybe this leads us to the problem of workers' councils and self-management. In a relatively unindustrialized country in Lenin's time, when struggles among classes were not institutionalized, a struggle for demands quickly turned into a struggle which challenged the whole system.

But today the workers' bourgeois institutions have become so thick--namely the working class institutions within bourgeois society--that every element of challenge tends to be co-opted within imaginary phenomena. For example, the class struggle tends theoretically to destroy bourgeois society, so it is co-opted by bourgeois society and placed on an imaginary scene where we no longer see a class struggle, but rather a sort of dialectic between master and slave, or a species of mutual alienation where the slave is a slave because he recognizes the supremacy of the master,

while the master is master because he addresses the slaves as such.

In brief, using a psychoanalytic concept this time, one might say that it's a battle among rivals for phenomena like recognition, prestige and so on, a species of prestige recognition between the Communist Party representing the working class and the group representing the bourgeoisie; in short, a type of absolutely imaginary struggle. De Gaulle grasped the mechanism perfectly; he concentrated all

his efforts on making people forget the real challenge to the society which had appeared; he turned the whole thing into a dialogue between master and slave, between Gaullists and the Communist Party.

How does our intervention fit into all that? It's not a matter of fitting ourselves into the problem, but of fighting to create an opposition to this imaginary phenomenon, to this imaginary class struggle; struggling to create a symbolic place, namely a place for discussion where this

YOUR STRUGGLE IS OUR STRUGGLE

We occupied the universities, you're occupying the factories. Are we both fighting for the same thing?

Among the university students, 10% are sons of workers. Are we fighting to get more sons of workers into the University, are we fighting for a democratic reform of the university? It would be better, but that's not what's most important. The sons of workers would become students like all the others. It's not our program to make it possible for the son of a worker to become a director. We want to do away with the separation between workers and managers.

There are some students who do not find work when they leave the university. Are we fighting so they'll find work? for a good employment policy for those with diplomas? It would be better, but that's not what's essential. The people with psychology or sociology diplomas will become the examiners, the psychotechnicians, the orientators who will try to arrange your working conditions; those with mathematics diplomas will become the engineers who will develop machines which are more productive and more insupportable for you. Why do we, students who come from the bourgeoisie, criticize the capitalist society? For a worker's son, becoming a student means leaving his social class. For the son of a bourgeois, this could be the occasion to recognize the real nature of his class, to question the social function toward which he's aimed, to examine the organization of the society and the place he occupies in it. 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 do away with the separation between the work of execution and the work of reflection and organization. We want to build a society without classes. The meaning of your struggle is the same.

In the Paris region, you're demanding a minimum wage of 1000 F, retirement at 60, a forty-hour week and payment for 48 hours.

These are just and old demands. They seem to have nothing to do with our goals. But in fact you're occupying the factories, you take the owners as hostages, you go on strike without warning. These forms of action have been made possible by the long struggle you've led with perseverance in the factories, and by the students' recent struggle.

These struggles are more radical than our legitimate demands because they don't only seek the improvement of the worker's condition within the capitalist system; they imply the destruction of this system. They are political in the real sense of the word: you're not fighting to change the Prime Minister, but in order to remove the owner's power in the factory and in the society. The form of your struggle offers us, the students, a model of real socialist activity: the appropriation of the means of production and of decision-making power by the workers.

Your struggle and our struggle converge. We have to destroy everything that isolates us from each other (habits, newspapers, etc.). We have to make a junction between the occupied factories and the occupied universities.

LONG LIVE THE UNIFICATION OF OUR STRUGGLES!

Everyone to the four meeting places and to the demonstration at the Gare de Lyon, today, Friday May 24, 1968 at 7 p.m.

March 22 Movement

spontaneity which doesn't exist can emerge and develop, a spontaneity which can only grow out of the collective expression of all the workers, and not the individual speeches of workers.

It's from experiences like those of the commissions that the element which contests bourgeois society can develop, provided that a completely new role is given to the vanguard, a role which does not consist of what the Trotskyists call a "revolutionary direction." And the March 22 has this function to some extent--not to direct or organize the proletariat or the revolutionary forces, but to interpret spontaneity. This is a fundamental distinction.

What does "spontaneity" mean? What does "interpretation" mean? Interpretation refers to collective psychoanalysis: the problem is to bring out and interpret a given link in the expression of workers, for example the occupation of factories. It's the unconscious aspiration of the working class to become owner of the means of production.

This seems clear and obvious; it can be said anywhere by leaflets or tracts, but so long as there's no place where autonomous workers can express themselves, so long as there's no symbolic level for this expression instead of an imaginary level, then this can always be co-opted by the ruling class.

As soon as one goes into the factories and discusses, one perceives that there are few workers who talk--the simple fact that a worker is willing to talk to us is already a certain manner for him to stand out. On one side there are the bureaucrats, the Party members who generally control the CGT, those who at the beginning try to oppose us and then, seeing that they've lost control, tried to stop all discussion. On the other side there are the rest of the workers, most of whom understood (perhaps 90% of them) that the CGT betrayed them, that it slowed things down, that something else had to be done. But the individuals who talked to us at the factory entrances did not express the thoughts of the workers, but merely the thoughts of individuals, which is different.

So long as a rupture within bourgeois institutions, within the CGT and within the Party does not take place col-

lectively and is not taken in charge by the workers inside the factories, nothing will ever be changed; it will always be co-opted by the system. But if a rupture takes place, it can only take place together with the creation of this permanent "meeting."

This is actually the starting point, the A-B-C; this creation corresponds to the workers' councils; it's the political and symbolic expression of spontaneity. From that point on the mechanism is launched: an irreducible conflict starts between the collectivity on one side and the bourgeois institutions--the owners as well as the CGT--on the other side. At this point it's no longer a question of individual expression, but of the collective expression of the working class.

These concepts of self-management, however, do not emerge purely. Expression is not so much an intellectual process, as we have been able to see it, but arises each time through concrete joint problems, which are posed at certain phases of the struggle, as for example, how to organize self-defense at Flins. The problem was: how would the workers and students who came back and forth from the outside get around the police blockades. The answer was progressively developed, together with a part of the population around the area and the workers at the plant: the answer consisted of housing the militants who had come from outside.

And also the problem of expression consists of not letting the organizations institutionalize it, thus stealing it from the workers, or substituting themselves for the workers. For example, the classroom or the school which functions according to the methods of Freinet, an educational reformer, where an organ of expression is created on the basis of concrete activity (a printing press, correspondence with other students, visits to factories) is a classroom council. The schoolteacher plays a purely marginal role, at the limit the role of observer, of an adviser; he never imposes his advice, and when it's time to vote, he votes last.

Thus we can see that the classroom council is a workers' council, and in a certain way it's a working class council, but it is always based on a concrete activity of exchange with the exterior which is consistent with other class coun-

TRAVAILLER MAINTENANT



C EST TRAVAILLER AVEC UN PISTOLET DANS LE DOS

To work now is to work with a pistol in your back

cils.

The children of such a cooperative are no longer students of the old school; here we have another structure, another collectivity and other children. The most passive, the most inert, the most amorphous begin to have ideas and to say, "I could do that," and go ahead and invent a project and realize it. What was determining was the rupture in the pyramidal organization, and the appearance, on the basis of a project or of several concrete projects, of a classroom council; at that point the mechanism is set off and the students simply express themselves. But this is not expression for its own sake; it is expression based on a concrete activity.

The starting point for a fundamental critique of the attempt to create a revolutionary movement or of the coordination of the action committees formed on May 10 or May 3, is the question of whether or not a coordination is possible on the basis of "what will we do?" It was proposed: "We will get organized in this manner." Why? "In order to fight on the question of self-defense, currently, here and now." This is a possible approach: relations of spontaneity, and institutions.

Another concrete example: how can one begin to solve the problem of coordination and of the existence of concrete solidarity between the workers fighting in Flins and the students, the "militant, revolutionary students"?

Preceding all other questions is the question: what is the meaning of solidarity between workers who are themselves directly engaged in the process of production, and other revolutionary militants who are not so engaged? This was not answered at all on the level of theoretical and abstract discussions on what an intellectual can do in the revolutionary process, and what role is played by the elements who are active in the process of production. This was answered at the level of a very concrete problem: how can the strike pickets hold out?

Answer: we need all the revolutionary elements who can support us. And yesterday, at the permanent meeting at the Parc du Château des Mureaux (near Flins), an answer appeared in a completely logical manner, within the very logic of the movement.

A comrade of March 22 took out a map and presented the following problem: "The first time we intervened at the entrances to the factory with people who came from outside, the coordination took place on the spot. Given the presence of the C.R.S., and given the fact that workers have not received satisfaction, etc. etc., it was possible to convince the workers to come down." We agreed with his hypothesis that the cops would not repeat the same mistake as the first time, namely letting the strike pickets get close to the factory. And the rest was not developed by us, since we had no knowledge, for example, of the location of supervisors inside the factory, of the central gathering places.

During this meeting the workers of the factory informed us of the place where the cars passed. And at this point, at the gathering places near Flins from which cars leave for the factory--there are four or five of them--we resolved the problem of the presence of people at the nearest entrances, and of the impossibility of the strike pickets getting to the cars immediately.

This question could never have been solved if this meeting had not taken place and without this exchange of information.

Ultimately, the relations between militant revolutionary intellectuals and struggling workers have always been badly presented. After fifty years of revolutionary mythology, the workers themselves have an understanding which the petit-bourgeois intellectual can never have. At this level of "dialogue" based on a completely unreal image of the other, all movements, over several decades, posed problems which could never be solved, and yet which solved themselves in obvious ways within a practical action. When it comes to acting, you and I might have blue eyes, but there's a guy with grey ones, another with a particular quality, and a third with still another; in the dialogue of action all this goes together, becomes concrete, and what comes out is a full expression.

The problem of coordinating struggles, the problem of workers' solidarity, is often posed by revolutionary leaders. It's precisely in the context of this concrete problem that the reoccupation of the Flins factory by the workers can be

June 21

How can the problem of taking of power be examined today? In particular, how can we examine the problem from where we are -- a movement which defined itself or was defined by the reactions of a bourgeois political society to its actions -- as a movement of challenge? Challenge-exposure, the unveiling of what is unsupportable, bringing to light the mechanisms at the origin of the unendurable, the creation of a place, or a word of rejection of refusal -- this is possible. The way to destroy that unendurable condition is through the formation of this place, and implies that starting from this place, using the same methods, the instruments for the taking of power can be developed.

The question as to whether the Movement is a movement of challenge or an instrument for the taking of power was not answered; nevertheless, the problem itself was posed in a General Assembly, and it was posed by certain actions which were proposed; I'm thinking particularly of discussions which took place in the Decorative Arts building, and of the first or second General Assembly at the Maison des Lettres. It seemed to me then, and it still does, that we were intoxicated by a very schematic image of what the conquest of power could be, and we limited the problem to the conquest of central power. I think that here we're paying for a dried up heritage, one which lacks the sense of Leninism. In other words, the problem of the power of the bourgeoisie becomes the problem of the bourgeois state machine, and then revolutionary problem No. 1 becomes the conquest of this state and thus the organization necessary for this. At this point, those who reject the parliamentary road pose the question of conquering the state apparatus.

The hazy reference to general insurrection in many of our talks seemed superficial to me; it seemed like an impoverished vision of the taking of Petersburg in 1917, a vision which could be characterized as "putschism of the left." What seems very important to me is that in 1917, at the moment of the insurrection, power was no longer in the hands of the state apparatus, or rather that the state apparatus and its institutions were no longer the centers of power (uncontrolled regions, disorganized state services, impotent Duma, . . .); power was in the last nest of repression (the army, the police). The insurrection did not take place to give power to the Party as such, but rather it followed the motto "Power to the Soviets." It's this installation of a double power, this planting of stakes which dismantles the central power and deprives it of its role of unifier of repression that seems to me to be the revolutionary task par excellence, a task more important than the establishment of general plans for military insurrection. It's certain that no matter how much we wanted to, we did not try to take the Elysee; but this step of an insurrection by force is present in the type of goals we give to the demonstrations and the direct actions (the city hall, the police headquarters); it's always the idea of central power that's in question, and "minimizing 1917" does not answer the question of the conquest of real power or of the installation of a double power. Obviously, the simplest and most concrete translation of power is the existence of liberated zones, as they appear through the experience of our Vietnamese or Latin American comrades. In the last analysis we've never had the possibility to seriously pose the problem of armed struggle or guerrilla nests. Until now these two themes, like that of urban guerrilla, have helped us to understand and interpret a real movement in which we found ourselves; but these were passing references, not explicit models of action. Neither the universities nor the occupied factories can be considered liberated zones without exaggeration, even though it is evident that each occupation or each evacuation is expressed in terms of political and military defeat or victory, gain or loss. So it seems that what's escaped is the realization of the double power which was called for and symbolically effectuated, and that it's to the conquest of this partial power that we're permanently attached. The entire significance of the direct action is in question here: what should we destroy on the one hand and conquer on the other. Direct action can lead to real power (through the acquisition of the materials necessary for the continuation of the struggle, the establishment of strategic places and information circuits, the destruction of the bourgeoisie's ability to retort. Every conquest must be used and must become a springboard for further action in order to be a symbolic demonstration of the existence or of the possibility of double power (a defiance addressed to the bourgeoisie in control of the state can go from a gag to a traditional commando action.)

continued from page 1



consequently, if the maintenance of order is a necessary evil, this evil is a good which every mother's son ought to accept like a gift from Heaven: the invented Grace of lay society, the Gift of the Holy Spirit passed on-- no one is supposed to be ignorant of the Law --to every heir worthy of that name.

Aside from that, he will be asked to study society, to think the truth, to subject facts to rigorous analysis, something acceptable in itself (since one is allowed to do it). But, what is more, he will be asked to give his consent, to give his approval! This is going a little too far, when they ask you to pull down your pants in order to be whipped: it's enough that they dull the masses' minds through distorted and faked broadcasts and condition them through mass communications, but it's too much to ask them to dull their own minds. In fact, there is only one thing to learn if you study the way society works: it is the established violence of that arbitrary, defacto state which is the bourgeois State defined by all the hidden monsters it rejects: freedom, madness, poverty, delinquency, sexuality, responsibility, spontaneity, real democracy, happiness, black, yellow and red races, working force etc.,

in short all these zones disqualified by their very names which are precisely the product of the counter-terror the bourgeoisie inflicts on itself in order to uphold its generalized empire of submission to the single law of profit, of efficiency, of productivity. It is that little truth, the fundamental truth of the contradiction between its Law and Freedom, the common ground and root of nearly two centuries of bourgeois social life, which flies into pieces and leaves the bourgeoisie breathless before the spectacle of the age-old base of its existence trembling under the feet of the historical progress of its sons: the rejection of the heritage -- this is the imminent verdict a class passes on itself through its sons, a verdict which leaves it without appeal against the sudden contestation of its laws. For a long while, the revolution was optimistic: violence went hand in hand with reason. The same causes provoked rebellion and gave it the means of its success and its realization. Humanity only posed problems it could solve. More recently -- and this is the genial touch of neo-capitalism -- rebellion and the rational instruments of its realization are separate: the underdeveloped countries (without productive forces), the students (without social integration) embody revolt and violence: the capitalist bourgeoisie, reason and actual power. Can industrial society become the truth of humanity? Hell no! This brand new paroxysmic violence re-invents instruments, an original rationality, and finds new remedies for the impotence that has overtaken it. It merely broadens somewhat the scope of what it is willing to risk in the struggle, which, this time, is immediately life, existence! From there on, everything changes its meaning: what seemed an impossible condition is revealed as amply sufficient to gain the result: the risks are merely multiplied.

One has to have seen the Vietnamese repairing the wheel of a bicycle with a nut taken from a shot-down American plane in order to understand that type of rationality, neither that of long range goals nor that of immediate gains, has been rejected by the revolutionaries, but simply that it has changed its meaning, that it will be the rational invention which they will place in the service of the fundamental reason which is the sacrifice of their existence, their existence ready to sacrifice: a mere nut, the derisive symbol of the greatest industrial society in the world,

becoming the whole of Reason in the absolute context in which they have decided to expose their lives.

One has to have seen the students of Paris digging up the paving-stones in the streets to know that Reason is less exigent than its doctors of science teach, since it is ready to come and support revolt in action against the complex exigencies of that reason in the hands of policemen who have nothing to expose and all to lose and who must hide behind the elaborate armour of their armoured cars, the plexiglass of their shields and other refined instruments of self-defense.

One has to have learned the lesson of Castro and Guevara in order to know how strategy can be totally re-invented in every circumstance when the revolution is plugged into the spontaneity of the fighter's life offered as an alternative: running battle, political meeting, hit-and-run occupation of territory, provocation, stripping bare of the enemy's violence-- all the weapons of revolutionary mobilization and of rational action crushing the pseudo-rationality of the opponent, reduced to the sole weapons of mass bombing and extermination.

And of course you have to take advantage of your opponent's limitations: of the fact that he is not yet ready to order his praetorian guards to shoot his own sons and thus that the police are limited to a certain type of offensive-defensive fight. This is the very price of the ideological purity in which the student revolt develops, for it is because they are the sons of their fathers that the students are able to carry on the fight in this extremely unique civil war where they are fighting against their own privileges, and that they are able at the same time to hit the opponent at a point and on a terrain where it is impossible for him to hit back as he would faced with a class enemy.

It is because they are striking the weakest link in Western imperialism, its ideological link, that their revolt is at once dangerous and also reaches the height of explosive violence it has revealed. And there is no reason to have scruples, for it is the same thing in Vietnam: the struggle is determined in each case in accordance with the nature of the opponents and the relation of opposing forces and not in relation to the purity of the sacrifice.

It is because world opinion would not accept the use of the atomic bomb that, this means excluded, all the revolutionary inventions of the Vietnamese forces become possible.

"No goal, no definite aim, no alternative" -- and the fathers stand dumb-struck before the phenomenon of this revolution which is in appearance without program and seems to be the opposite of what is the essence of any demand. Because where it's at is this: outside of all orders of rationality since the bourgeoisie has taken over all existing rationalities, thus to contest it in the place where it is without defense, for it is its very existence which is hanging there: its existence as the truth of the advanced, developed, industrial world, that is that acts always have their reason, i.e., their motive and finally their interest.

It is because all reason is on the other side, on the side of paternity, of the law, of just and perfect reason, in short on the side of terror, to that obsessive constraint of passed on, inherited, curbing, paralyzing, neutralizing law.

It is by this right that violence still constitutes the most adequate representation of the sought after end and the demanded change. Through it, the students are immediately confronted on the very ground of the bourgeois State, obliged to turn against it, to dig it up from the street and hurl it in a gesture of pure violence into the face of helmeted, enraged, lined-up cops. A major revolutionary moment where man is defined no longer by his heritage but his possibility of making himself on the basis of his single decision to decide his fate. Don't worry: there is no shortage of concrete objectives, but their irrationalism must remain silent as long as they have not acquired the realism which the overthrow of the present system will give them.

We live in the epoch of collective "madness." Castro taking an island with 13 men, Mao closing the universities for a year, thus winning over the mass of anti-bureaucratic forces (whether he wanted to or not) which will assure the permanence of the revolution, the Vietnamese, finally, who are holding off the most powerful military and industrial nation in the world with their simple bicycles. Let's bet that we are witnessing the birth of a new collective "madness," and that, like the preceding ones, it will succeed: that it has already won.



L'HUMANITÉ
NE SERA HEUREUSE
QUE LE JOUR OÙ
LE DERNIER BUREAUCRATE
AURA ÉTÉ PENDING
TRAJES DU DERNIER
CAPITALISTE

Humanity won't be happy until the last bureaucrat is hung with the guts of the last capitalist

A letter to André Malraux



Paris, June 17, 1968

Monsieur Le Ministre,

Alberto Giacometti would surely not have allowed an official exhibition of his works to take place under the present circumstances: repression of the students and workers, expulsion of foreigners and especially of artists.

I therefore formally oppose the exhibition scheduled for next October at the Museum of the Orangerie and suspend immediately the work I have done in preparation for this event.

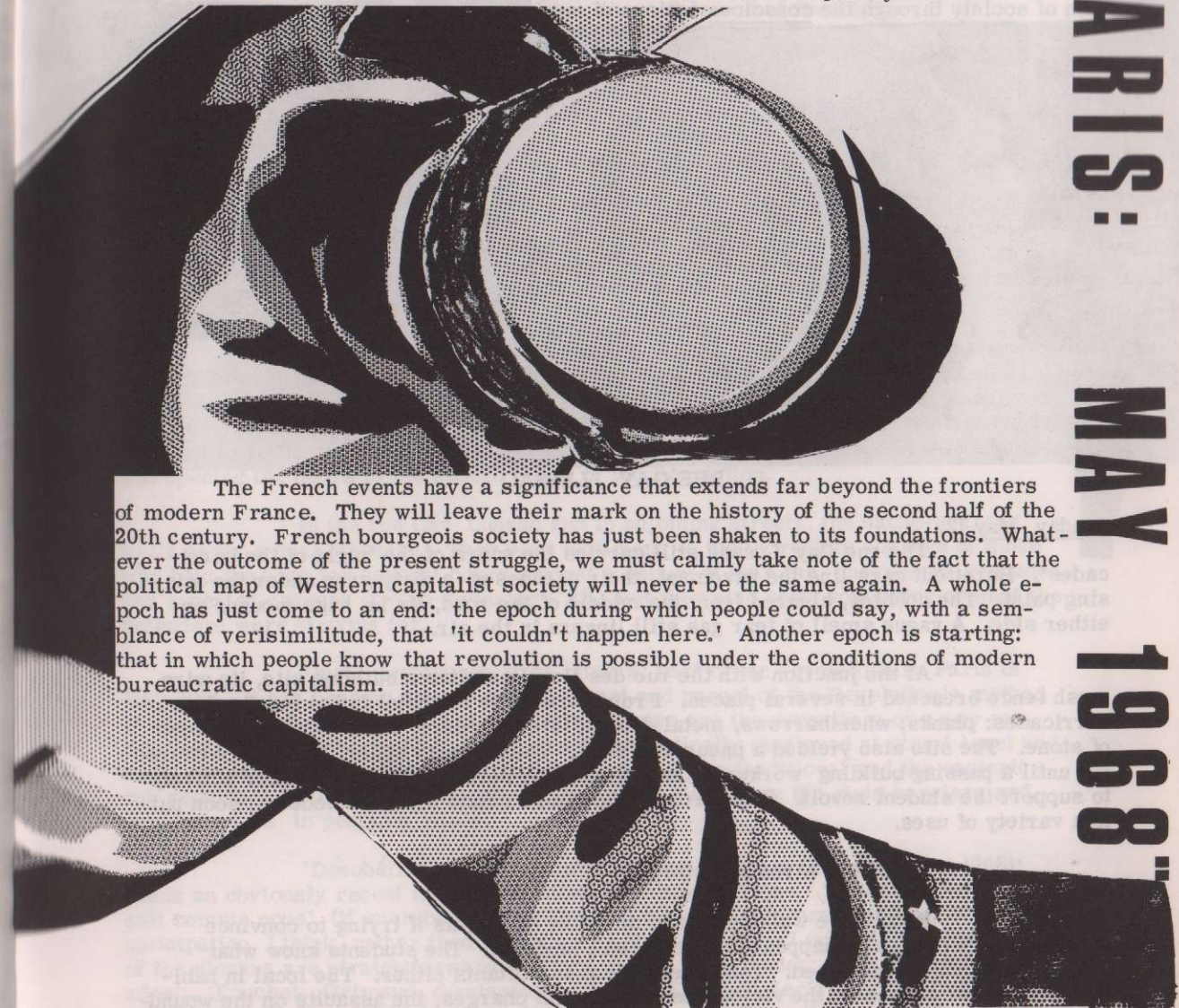
Yours very truly,

ANNETTE GIACOMETTI

Artists and writers protest

THE FOLLOWING TEXT IS TAKEN FROM THE SOLIDARITY PAMPHLET NO. 30 (Published by Solidarity, c/o H. Russell, 53A Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent: London, England.

This is an eye witness account of two weeks spent in Paris during May 1968. It is what one person saw, heard or discovered during that short period. The account has no pretence at comprehensiveness. It has been written and produced in haste, its purpose being to inform rather than to analyse --- and to inform quickly.

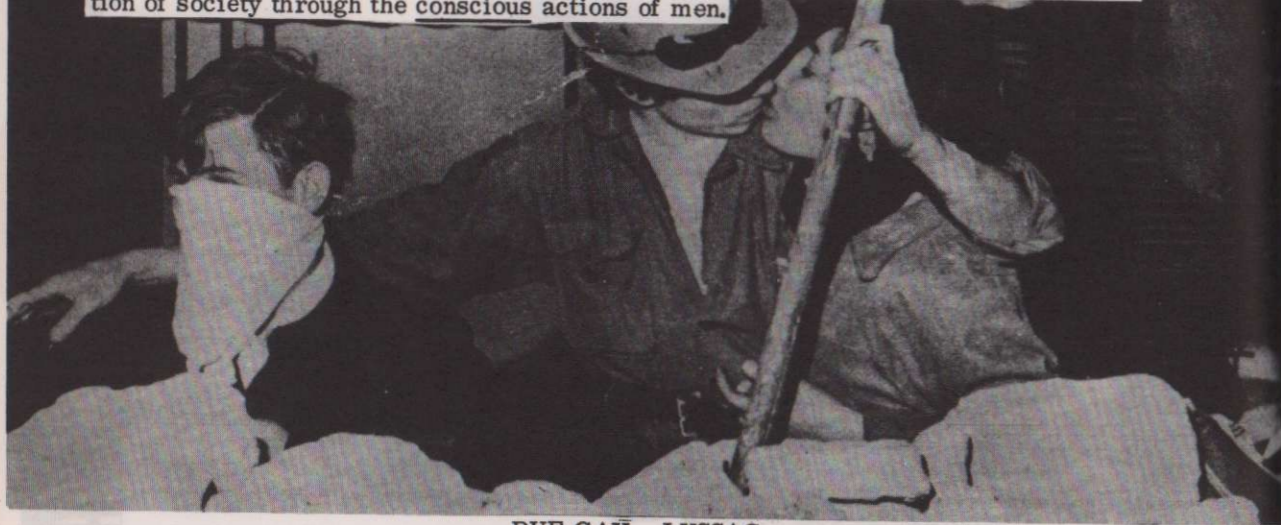


The French events have a significance that extends far beyond the frontiers of modern France. They will leave their mark on the history of the second half of the 20th century. French bourgeois society has just been shaken to its foundations. Whatever the outcome of the present struggle, we must calmly take note of the fact that the political map of Western capitalist society will never be the same again. A whole epoch has just come to an end: the epoch during which people could say, with a semblance of verisimilitude, that 'it couldn't happen here.' Another epoch is starting: that in which people know that revolution is possible under the conditions of modern bureaucratic capitalism.

For Stalinism too, a whole period is ending: the period during which Communist Parties in Western Europe could claim (admittedly with dwindling credibility) that they remained revolutionary organizations, but that revolutionary opportunities had never really presented themselves. This notion has now irrevocably been swept into the proverbial 'dustbin of history'. When the chips were down, the French Communist Party and those workers under its influence proved to be the final and most effective 'brake' on the development of the revolutionary self-activity of the working class.

"PARIS: MAY 1968"

A full analysis of the French events will eventually have to be attempted, for without an understanding of modern society it will never be possible consciously to change it. But this analysis will have to wait for a while until some of the dust has settled. What can be said from now is that, if honestly carried out, such an analysis will compel many 'orthodox' revolutionaries to discard a mass of outdated ideas, slogans and myths and to re-assess contemporary reality, particularly the reality of modern bureaucratic capitalism, its dynamic, its methods of control and manipulation, the reasons for both its resilience and its brittleness and - most important of all - the nature of its crises. Concepts and organizations that have been found wanting will have to be discarded. The new phenomena (new in themselves or new to traditional revolutionary theory) will have to be recognized for what they are and interpreted in all their implications. The real events of 1968 will then have to be integrated into a new framework of ideas, for without this development of revolutionary theory, there can be no development of revolutionary practice - and in the long run no transformation of society through the conscious actions of men.



RUE GAY LUSSAC

Sunday, May 12.

The rue Gay Lussac still carries the scars of the 'night of the barricades'. Burnt out cars line the pavement, their carcasses a dirty grey under the missing paint. The cobbles, cleared from the middle of the road, lie in huge mounds on either side. A vague smell of tear gas still lingers in the air.

At the junction with the rue des Ursulines lies a building site, its wire mesh fence breached in several places. From here came material for at least a dozen barricades: planks, wheelbarrows, metal drums, steel girders, cement mixers, blocks of stone. The site also yielded a pneumatic drill. The students couldn't use it, of course not until a passing building worker showed them how, perhaps the first worker actively to support the student revolt. Once broken, the road surface provided cobbles, soon put to a variety of uses.

All that is already history.

People are walking up and down the street, as if trying to convince themselves that it really happened. They aren't students. The students know what happened and why it happened. They aren't local inhabitants either. The local inhabitants saw what happened, the viciousness of the CRS charges, the assaults on the wounded, the attacks on innocent bystanders, the unleashed fury of a state machine against those who had challenged it. The people in the streets are the ordinary people of Paris, people from neighboring districts, horrified at what they have heard over the wireless or read in their papers and who have come for a walk on a fine Sunday morning to see for themselves. They are talking in small clusters with the inhabitants of the rue Gay Lussac. The Revolution, having for a week held the university and the streets of the Latin Quarter, is beginning to take hold of the minds of men.

On Friday, May 3rd, the CRS had paid their historic visit to the Sorbonne. They had been invited in by Paul Roche, rector of Paris University. The rector had almost certainly acted in connivance with Alain Peyrefitte, Minister of Education, if not with the Elysee itself. Many students had been arrested, beaten up, and several were summarily convicted.

The unbelievable - yet thoroughly predictable - ineptitude of this bureaucratic 'solution' to the 'problem' of student discontent triggered off a chain reaction. It provided the pent-up anger, resentment and frustration of tens of thousands of young people with both a reason for further action and with an attainable objective. The students, evicted from the university, took to the street, demanding the liberation of their comrades, the reopening of their faculties, the withdrawal of the cops.

Layer upon layer of new people were soon drawn into the struggle. The student union (UNEF) and the union representing university teaching staff (SNEFup) called for an unlimited strike. For a week the students held their ground, in ever bigger and more militant street demonstrations. On Tuesday, May 7, 50,000 students and teachers marched through the streets behind a single banner: 'Vive la Commune', and sang the Internationale at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, at the Arc de Triomphe. On Friday, May 10, students and teachers decide to occupy the Latin Quarter en masse. They felt they had more right to be there than the police, for whom barracks were provided elsewhere. The cohesion and sense of purpose of the demonstrators terrified the Establishment. Power couldn't be allowed to lie with this rabble, who had even had the audacity to erect barricades.

Another inept gesture was needed. Another administrative reflex duly materialised. Fouchet (Minister of the Interior) and Joxe (Deputy Prime Minister) ordered Grimaud (Superintendent of the Paris police) to clear the streets. The order was confirmed in writing, doubtless to be preserved for posterity as an example of what not to do in certain situations. The CRS charged... clearing the rue Gay Lussac and opening the doors to the second phase of the Revolution.

In the rue Gay Lussac and in adjoining streets, the battle-scarred walls carry a dual message. They bear testimony to the incredible courage of those who held the area for several hours against a deluge of tear gas, phosphorus grenades, and repeated charges of club-swinging CRS. But they also show something of what the defenders were striving for...

Mural propaganda is an integral part of the revolutionary Paris of May 1968. It has become a mass activity, part and parcel of the Revolution's method of self-expression. The walls of the Latin Quarter are the depository of a new rationality, no longer confined to books, but democratically displayed at street level and made available to all. The trivial and the profound, the traditional and the esoteric, rub shoulders in this new fraternity, rapidly breaking down the rigid barriers and compartments in people's minds.

'Désobéir d'abord: alors écris sur les murs (Loi du 10 Mai 1968)! reads an obviously recent inscription, clearly setting the tone. 'Si tout le peuple faisait comme nous' (if everybody acted like us...) wistfully dreams another, in joyful anticipation, I think, rather than in any spirit of self-satisfied substitutionism. Most of the slogans are straightforward, correct and fairly orthodox: 'Libérez nos camarades'; 'Fouchet, Grimaud, démission'; 'A bas l'État policier'; 'Grève Générale Lundi'; 'Travailleurs, Etudiants, solidaires'; 'Vive les Conseils Ouvriers'. Other slogans reflected the new concerns: 'La Publicité te manipule'; 'Examens = Hiérarchie'; 'L'art est mort, ne consommez pas son cadavre'; 'A bas la société de consommation'; 'Debout les damnés de Nanterre'. The slogan 'Baisses-toi et broute' (Bend your head and chew the cud) was obviously aimed at those whose minds are still full of traditional preoccupations.

Roche →



LES JOURNÉES DE MAI



'Contre la fermentation groupusculaire' moans a large scarlet inscription. This one is really out of touch. For everywhere there is a profusion of pasted up posters and journals: 'Voix Ouvrière', 'Avant-Garde and Révoltes' (for the Trotskyists), 'Servir le Peuple' and 'Humanité Nouvelle' (for the devotees of Chairman Mao), 'Le Libertaire' (for the Anarchists), 'Tribune Socialiste' (for the PSU). Even odd copies of l'Humanité are pasted up. It is difficult to read them, so covered are they with critical comments.

On a hoarding, I see a large advertisement for a new brand of cheese: a child biting into an enormous sandwich. 'C'est bon le fromage So-and-So' runs the patter. Someone has covered the last few words with red paint. The poster reads 'C'est bon la Revolution'. People pass by, look and smile.

I talk to my companion, a man of about 45, an 'old' revolutionary. We discuss the tremendous possibilities now opening up. He suddenly turns towards me and comes out with a memorable phrase: 'To think one had to have kids and wait 20 years to see all this...'

We talk to others in the street, to young and old, to the 'political' and the 'unpolitical', to people at all levels of understanding and commitment. Everyone is prepared to talk - in fact everyone wants to. They all seem remarkably articulate. We find no one prepared to defend the actions of the Administration. The 'critics' fall into 2 main groups:

The 'progressive' University teachers, the Communists, and a number of students see the main root of the student 'crisis' in the backwardness of the university in relation to society's current needs, in the quantitative inadequacy of the tuition provided, in the semi-feudal attitudes of some professors, and in the general insufficiency of job opportunities. They see the university as inadapted to the modern world. The remedy for them is adaptation: a modernising reform which would sweep away the cobwebs, provide more teachers, better lecture theatres, a bigger educational budget, perhaps a more liberal attitude on the campus and, at the end of it all, an assured job.

The rebels (which include some but by no means all of the 'old' revolutionaries) see this concern with adapting the university to modern society as something of a diversion. For it is modern society itself which they reject. They consider bourgeois life trivial and mediocre, repressive and repressed. They have no yearning (but only contempt) for the administrative and managerial careers it holds out for them. They are not seeking integration into adult society. On the contrary, they are seeking a chance radically to contest its adulteration. The driving force of their revolt is their own alienation, the meaninglessness of life under modern bureaucratic capitalism. It is certainly not a purely economic deterioration in their standard of living.

It is no accident that the 'revolution' started in the Nanterre faculties of Sociology and Psychology. The students saw that the sociology they were being taught was a means of controlling and manipulating society, not a means of understanding it in order to change it. In the process they discovered revolutionary sociology. They rejected the niche allocated to them in the great bureaucratic pyramid, that of 'experts' in the service of a technocratic Establishment, specialists of the 'human factor' in the modern industrial equation. In the process they discovered the importance of the working class. The amazing thing is that, at least among the active layers of the students, these 'sectarians' suddenly seem to have become the majority: surely the best definition of any revolution.

The two types of 'criticism' of the modern French educational system do not neutralise one another. On the contrary, each creates its own kind of problems for the University authorities and for the officials at the Ministry of Education. The real point is that one kind of criticism - what one might call the quantitative one - could in time be coped with by modern bourgeois society. The other - the qualitative one - never. This is what gives it its revolutionary potential. The 'trouble with the University', for the powers that be, isn't that money can't be found for more teachers. It can. The 'trouble' is that the university is full of students - and that the heads of the students are full of revolutionary ideas.

Among those we speak to there is a deep awareness that the problem cannot be solved in the Latin Quarter, that isolation of the revolt is a student 'ghetto' (even an 'autonomous' one) would spell defeat. They realise that the salvation of the movement lies in its extension to other sectors of the population. But here wide differences appear. When some talk of the importance of the working class it is as a substitute for getting on with any kind of struggle themselves, an excuse for denigrating the students' struggle as 'adventurist'. Yet it is precisely because of its unparalleled militancy that the students' action has established that direct action works, has begun to influence the younger workers and to rattle the established organizations. Other students realise the relationship of these struggles more clearly. We will find them later at Censier (see p. 70), animating the 'worker - student' Action Committees.

But enough, for the time being, about the Latin Quarter. The movement has already spread beyond its narrow confines.



Monday, May 13.

6.15 am, Avenue Yves Kermen. A clear, cloudless day. Crowds begin to gather outside the gates of the giant Renault works at Boulogne Billancourt. The main trade union 'centrales' (CGT, CFDT, and FO) have called a one-day general strike. They are protesting against police violence in the Latin Quarter and in support of long-neglected claims concerning wages, hours, the age of retirement and trade union rights in the plants.

The factory gates are wide open. Not a cop or supervisor in sight. The workers stream in. A loudhailer tells them to proceed to their respective shops, to refuse to start work and to proceed, at 8.0 am, to their traditional meeting place, an enormous shed-like structure in the middle of the Ile Seguin (an island in the Seine entirely covered by parts of the Renault plant).

As each worker goes through the gates, the pickets give him a leaflet, jointly produced by the three unions. Leaflets in Spanish are also distributed (over 2000 Spanish workers are employed at Renault). French and Spanish orators succeed one another, in short spells, at the microphone. Although all the unions are supporting the one-day strike all the orators seem to belong to the CGT. It's their loudspeaker...

6.45 am. Hundreds of workers are now streaming in. Many look as if they had come to work, rather than to participate in mass meetings in the plant. The decision to call the strike was only taken on the Saturday afternoon, after many of the men had already dispersed for the weekend. Many seem unaware of what it's all about. I am struck by the number of Algerian and black workers.

FIRST PAVING STONE: LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS NOW!



(A deputy haranguing members) IT IS VERY CLEAR FROM THE WAY SOME CALLED AND THE OTHERS DID NOT...

SECOND PAVING STONE: FOOT ARE PAINT! HERE ARE STONES!



There are only a few posters at the gate, again mainly those of the CGT. Some pickets carry CFDT posters. There isn't an FO poster in sight. The road and walls outside the factory have been well covered with slogans: 'One day strike on Monday'; 'Unity in defense of our claims'; 'No to the monopolies'.

The little café near the gates is packed. People seem unusually wide awake and communicative for so early an hour. A newspaper kiosk is selling about 3 copies of l'Humanité for every copy of anything else. The local branch of the Communist Party is distributing a leaflet calling for 'resolution, calm, vigilance and unity' and warning against 'provocateurs'.

The pickets make no attempt to argue with those pouring in. No one seems to know whether they will obey the strike call or not. Less than 25% of Renault workers belong to any union at all. This is the biggest car factory in Europe.

The loudhailer hammers home its message: 'The CRS have recently assaulted peasants at Quimper, and workers at Caen, Rhodiaceta (Lyon) and Dassault. Now they are turning on the students. The regime will not tolerate opposition. It will not modernise the country. It will not grant us our basic wage demands. Our one day strike will show both Government and employers our determination. We must compel them to retreat.' The message is repeated again and again, like a gramophone record. I wonder whether the speaker believes what he says, whether he even senses what lies ahead.

At 7.0 am a dozen Trotskyists of the F.E.R. (Fédération des Etudiants Révolutionnaires) turn up to sell their paper Révoltes. They wear large red and white buttons proclaiming their identity. A little later another group arrives to sell Voix Ouvrière. The loudspeaker immediately switches from an attack on the Gaullist government and its CRS to an attack on 'provocateurs' and 'disruptive elements, alien to the working class'. The stalinist speaker hints that the sellers are in the pay of the government. As they are here, 'the police must be lurking in the neighbourhood'. Heated arguments break out between the sellers and CGT officials. The CFDT pickets are refused the use of the loudhailer. They shout 'démocratie ouvrière' and defend the right of the 'disruptive elements' to sell their stuff. A rather abstract right, as not a sheet is sold. The front page of Révoltes carries an esoteric article on Eastern Europe.

Much invective (but no blows) are exchanged. In the course of an argument I hear Bro. Trigon (delegate to the second electoral 'college' at Renault) describe Dany Cohn-Bendit as 'un agent du pouvoir' (an agent of the authorities). A student takes him up on this point. The Trots don't. Shortly before 8.0 am they walk off, their 'act of presence' accomplished and duly recorded for history.

At about the same time, hundreds of workers who had entered the factory leave their shops and assemble in the sunshine in an open space a few hundred yards inside the main gate. From there they amble toward the Ile Seguin, crossing one arm of the river Seine on the way. Other processions leave other points of the factory and converge on the same area. The metallic ceiling is nearly 200 feet above our heads. Enormous stocks of components are piled up right and left. Far away to the right an assembly line is still working, lifting what looks like rear car seats, complete with attached springs, from ground to first floor level.

Some 10,000 workers are soon assembled in the shed. The orators address them through a loudspeaker, from a narrow platform some 40 feet up. The platform runs in front of what looks like an elevated inspection post but which I am told is a union office inside the factory.

The CGT speaker deals with various sectional wage claims. He denounces the resistance of the government 'in the hands of the monopolies'. He produces facts and figures dealing with the wage structure. Many highly skilled men are not getting enough. A CFDT speaker follows him. He deals with the steady speed-up,

WORKERS BEWARE!

For some months the most diverse publications have been distributed by elements recruited in a milieu foreign to the working class.

The authors of these articles remain anonymous most of the time, a fact which fully illustrates their dishonesty. They give the most weird and tempting titles to their papers, the better to mislead: 'Luttes Ouvrières'; 'Servir le Peuple'; 'Unite et Travail' *; 'Lutte Communiste'; 'Revoltes'; 'Voix Ouvrière'; 'Un Groupe d'Ouvriers'.

The titles may vary but the content has a common objective: to lead the workers away from the CGT and to provoke divisions in their ranks, in order to weaken them.

At night, their commandos tear up our posters. Every time they distribute something at the gates, the police is not far off, ready to protect their distribution, as was the case recently at LMT. Recently they attempted to invade the offices of the Labour Exchange at Boulogne. Their activities are given an exaggerated publicity on the Gaullist radio and in the columns of the bourgeois press.

This warning is no doubt superfluous for the majority of Renault workers, who, in the past, have got to know about this kind of agitation. On the other hand the younger workers must be told that these elements are in the service of the bourgeoisie, who has always made use of these pseudo-revolutionaries whenever the rise of united left forces has presented a threat to its privileges.

It is therefore important not to allow these people to come to the gates of our factory, to sully our trade union organization and our CGT militants, who are tirelessly exerting themselves in defence of our demands and to bring about unity. These elements always reap a fat reward at the end of the day for their dirty work, and for the loyal services given to the bosses (some now occupy high positions in the management of the factory).

This having been said, the CGT (Renault) Committee calls on the workers to continue the fight for their demands, to intensify their efforts to ensure greater unity of the trade union and democratic forces, and to strengthen the ranks of the CGT struggling for these these noble objectives.

The Trade Union Bureau,
CGT, Renault.

* This is a fascist publication. All others are 'left' publications. A typical amalgam technique. (Ed.-Solidarity)

with the worsening of working conditions, with accidents and with the fate of man in production. 'What kind of life is this? Are we always to remain puppets, carrying out every whim of the management?'. He advocates uniform wage increases for all (augmentations non-hiérarchisées). An FO speaker follows. He is technically the most competent, but says the least. In flowery rhetoric he talks of 1936, but omits all reference to Léon Blum. The record of FO is bad in the factory and the speaker is heckled from time to time.

The CGT speakers then ask the workers to participate en masse in the big rally planned for that afternoon. As the last speaker finishes, the crowd spontaneously breaks out into a rousing "Internationale". The older men seem to know most of the words. The younger workers only know the chorus. A friend nearby assures me that in 20 years this is the first time he has heard the song sung inside Renault (he has attended dozens of mass meetings in the Ile Seguin). There is an atmosphere of excitement, particularly among the younger workers.

The crowd then breaks up into several sections. Some walk back over the bridge and out of the factory. Others proceed systematically through the shops where a few hundred blokes are still at work. Some of these men argue but most seem only too glad for an excuse to stop and join in the procession. Gangs weave their way, joking and singing, amid the giant presses and tanks. Those remaining at work are ironically cheered, clapped or exhorted to 'step on it', or 'work harder'. Occasional foremen look on helplessly, as one assembly line after another is brought to a halt.

MEETING

Many of the lathes have coloured pictures plastered over them: pin-ups and green fields, sex and sunshine. Anyone still working is exhorted to get out into the daylight, not just to dream about it. In the main plant, over half a mile long, hardly twelve men remain in their overalls. Not an angry voice can be heard. There is much good humoured banter. By 11 am thousands of workers have poured out into the warmth of a morning in May. An open-air beer and sandwich stall, outside the gate, is doing a roaring trade.

1.15 pm The streets are crowded. The response to the call for a 24-hour general strike has exceeded the wildest hopes of the trade unions. Despite the short notice Paris is paralysed. The strike was only decided 48 hours ago, after the 'night of the barricades'. It is moreover 'illegal'. The law of the land demands a five-day notice before an 'official' strike can be called. Too bad for legality.

A solid phalanx of young people is walking up the Boulevard de Sébastopol, towards the Gare de l'Est. They are proceeding to the student rallying point for the giant demonstration called jointly by the unions, the students' organization (UNEF) and the teachers' associations (FEN and SNESup).

There is not a bus or car in sight. The streets of Paris today belong to the demonstrators. Thousands of them are already in the square in front of the station. Thousands more are moving in from every direction. The plan agreed by the sponsoring organizations is for the different categories to assemble separately and then to converge on the Place de la République, from where the march will proceed across Paris, via the Latin Quarter, to the Place Denfert-Rochereau.

We are already packed like sardines, for as far as the eye can see, yet there is more than an hour to go before we are due to proceed. The sun has been shining all day. The girls are in summer dresses, the young men in shirt sleeves. A red flag is flying over the railway station. There are many red flags in the crowd and several black ones too.

A SOCIETE EST UNE FLEUR VIVE

A man suddenly appears carrying a suitcase full of duplicated leaflets. He belongs to some left 'groupuscule' or other. He opens his suitcase and distributes perhaps a dozen leaflets. But he doesn't have to continue alone. There is an unquenchable thirst for information, ideas, literature, argument, polemic. The man just stands there as people surround him and press forward to get the leaflets. Dozens of demonstrators, without even reading the leaflet, help him distribute them. Some 6,000 copies get out in a few minutes. All seem to be assiduously read. People argue, laugh, joke. I witnessed such scenes again and again.

Sellers of revolutionary literature are doing well. An edict, signed by the organizers of the demonstration, that 'the only literature allowed would be that of the organizations sponsoring the demonstration' (see l'Humanité, May 13, 1968, p. 5) is being enthusiastically flouted. This bureaucratic restriction (much criticized the previous evening when announced at Censier by the student delegates to the Coordinating Committee) obviously cannot be enforced in a crowd of this size. The revolution is bigger than any organization, more tolerant than any institution 'representing' the masses, more realistic than any edict of any Central Committee.

Demonstrators have climbed onto walls, onto the roofs of bus stops, onto the railings in front of the station. Some have loudhailers and make short speeches. All the 'politicos' seem to be in one part or other of this crowd. I can see the banner of the Jeunesse Communiste Revolutionnaire, portraits of Castro and Che Guevara, the banner of the FER, several banners of 'Servir le Peuple' (a maoist group) and the banner of the UJCM (Union de la Jeunesse Communiste Marxiste-Leniniste), another maoist tendency. There are also banners from many educational establishments now occupied by those who work there. Large groups of lycéens (high school kids) mingle with the students as do many thousands of teachers.

At about 2.0 pm the student section sets off, singing the 'Internationale'. We march twenty to thirty abreast, arms linked. There is a row of red flags in front of us, then a banner 50 feet wide carrying four simple words: 'Etudiants, Enseignants, Travailleurs, Solidaires'. It is an impressive sight.

The whole Boulevard de Magenta is a solid seething mass of humanity. We can't enter the Place de la République, already packed full of demonstrators. One can't even move along the pavements or through adjacent streets. Nothing but people, as far as the eye can see.

As we proceed slowly down the Boulevard de Magenta, we notice on a 3rd floor balcony, high on our right, an SFIO (Socialist Party) headquarters. The balcony is bedecked with a few decrepit-looking red flags and a banner proclaiming 'Solidarity with the Students'. A few elderly characters wave at us, somewhat self-consciously. Someone in the crowd starts chanting 'O-por-tunistes'. The slogan is taken up, rhythmically roared by thousands, to the discomfiture of those on the balcony who beat a hasty retreat. The people have not forgotten the use of the CRS against the striking miners, in 1958, by 'socialist' Minister of the Interior Jules Moch. They remember the 'socialist' Prime Minister Guy Mollet and his role during the Algerian War. Mercilessly, the crowd shows its contempt for the discredited politicians now seeking to jump on the band-wagon. 'Guy Mollet, au musée', they shout, amid laughter. It is truly the end of an epoch.

At about 3 pm we at last reach the Place de la République, our point of departure. The crowd here is so dense that several people faint and have to be carried into neighbouring cafés. Here people are packed almost as tight as in the street, but can at least avoid being injured. The window of one café gives way under the pressure of the crowd outside. There is a genuine fear, in several parts of the crowd, of being crushed to death. The first union contingents fortunately begin to leave the square. There isn't a policeman in sight.



LE POUVOIR EST DANS LA RUE

Romain Rolland
L'homme
L'homme
L'homme



Although the demonstration has been announced as a joint one, the CGT leaders are still striving desperately to avoid a mixing-up, on the streets, of students and workers. In this they are moderately successful. By about 4.30 pm the student and teachers' contingent, perhaps 80,000 strong, finally leaves the Place de la République. Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators have preceded it, hundreds of thousands follow it, but the 'left' contingent has been well and truly 'bottled-in'. Several groups, understanding at last the CGT's manoeuvre, break loose once we are out of the square. They take short cuts via various side streets, at the double and succeed in infiltrating groups of 100 or so into parts of the march ahead of them, or behind them. The stalinist stewards walking hand in hand and hemming the march in on either side are powerless to prevent these sudden influxes. The student demonstrators scatter like fish in water as soon as they have entered a given contingent. The CGT marchers themselves are quite friendly and readily assimilate the newcomers, not quite sure what it's all about. The students' appearance, dress and speech does not enable them to be identified as readily as they would be in Britain.

The main student contingent proceeds as a compact body. Now that we are past the bottleneck of the Place de la République the pace is quite rapid. The student group nevertheless takes at least half an hour to pass a given point. The slogans of the students contrast strikingly with those of the CGT. The students shout 'Le Pouvoir aux Ouvriers' (All Power to the Workers); 'Le Pouvoir est dans la rue' (Power lies in the street); 'Libérez nos camarades'. CGT members shout 'Pompidou, démission' (Pompidou, resign). The students chant 'de Gaulle, assassin', or 'CRS - SS'. The CGT: 'Des sous, pas de matraques' (money, not police clubs) or 'Défense du pouvoir d'achat' (Defend our purchasing power). The students say 'Non à l'Université de classe'. The CGT and the stalinist students, grouped around the banner of their paper *Clarté* reply 'Université Démocratique'. Deep political differences lie behind the differences of emphasis. Some slogans are taken up by everyone, slogans such as 'Dix ans, c'est assez', 'A bas l'État policier', or 'Bon anniversaire, mon Général'. Whole groups mournfully entone a well-known refrain: 'Adieu, de Gaulle'. They wave their handkerchieves, to the great merriment of the bystanders.

As the main student contingent crosses the Pont St. Michel to enter the Latin Quarter it suddenly stops, in silent tribute to its wounded. All thoughts are for a moment switched to those lying in hospital, their sight in danger through too much tear gas or their skulls or ribs fractured by the truncheons of the CRS. The sudden, angry silence of this noisiest part of the demonstration conveys a deep impression of strength and resolution. One senses massive accounts yet to be settled.

At the top of the Boulevard St. Michel I drop out of the march, climb onto a parapet lining the Luxembourg Gardens and just watch. I remain there for two hours as row after row of demonstrators march past, 30 or more abreast, a human tidal wave of fantastic, inconceivable size. How many are they? 600,000? 800,000? A million? 1,500,000? No one can really number them. The first of the demonstrators reached the final dispersal point hours before the last ranks had left the Place de la République, at 7.0 pm.

There were banners of every kind: union banners, student banners, political banners, non-political banners, reformist banners, revolutionary banners, banners of the *Mouvement contre l'Armement Atomique*, banners of various *Conseils de Parents d'Elèves*, banners of every conceivable size and shape, proclaiming a common abhorrence at what had happened and a common will to struggle on. Some banners were loudly applauded, such as the one saying 'Libérons l'information' (Let's have a free news service) carried by a group of employees from the ORTF. Some banners indulged in vivid symbolism, such as the gruesome one carried by a group of artists, depicting human hands, heads and eyes, each with its price tag, on display on the hooks and trays of a butcher's shop.

Endlessly they filed past. There were whole sections of hospital personnel, in white coats, some carrying posters saying 'Où sont les disparus des hopitaux?' (where are the missing injured?). Every factory, every major workplace seemed to be represented. There were numerous groups of railwaymen, postmen, printers, Metro personnel, metal workers, airport workers, market men, electricians, Lawyers, sewer men, bank employees, building workers, glass and chemical workers, waiters, municipal employees, painters and decorators, gas workers, shop girls, insurance clerks, road sweepers, film studio operators, busmen, teachers, workers from the new plastic industries, row upon row upon row of them, the flesh and blood of modern capitalist society, an unending mass, a power that could sweep everything before it, if it but decided to do so.

My thoughts went to those who say that the workers are only interested in football, in the 'tiercé' (horse-betting), in watching the telly, in their annual 'congés' (holidays), and that the working class cannot see beyond the problems of its everyday life. It was so palpably untrue. I also thought of those who say that only a narrow and rotten leadership lies between the masses and the total transformation of society. It was equally untrue. Today the working class is becoming conscious of its strength. Will it decide, tomorrow, to use it?

I rejoin the march and we proceed towards Denfert Rochereau. We pass several statues, sedate gentlemen now bedecked with red flags or carrying slogans such as 'Libérez nos camarades'. As we pass a hospital silence again descends on the endless crowd. Someone starts whistling the 'Internationale'. Others take it up. Like a breeze rustling over an enormous field of corn, the whistled tune ripples out in all directions. From the windows of the hospital some nurses wave at us.

At various intersections we pass traffic lights which by some strange inertia still seem to be working. Red and green alternate, at fixed intervals, meaning as little as bourgeois education, as work in modern society, as the lives of those walking past. The reality of today, for a few hours, has submerged all of yesterday's patterns.

The part of the march in which I find myself is now rapidly approaching what the organizers have decided should be the dispersal point. The CGT is desperately keen that its hundreds of thousands of supporters should disperse quietly. It fears them, when they are together. It wants them nameless atoms again, scattered to the four corners of Paris, powerless in the context of their individual preoccupations. The CGT sees itself as the only possible link between them, as the divinely ordained vehicle for the expression of their collective will. The 'Mouvement du 22 Mars', on the other hand, had issued a call to the students and workers, asking them to stick together and to proceed to the lawns of the Champ de Mars (at the foot of the Eiffel Tower) for a massive collective discussion on the experiences of the day and on the problems that lie ahead.

At this stage I sample for the first time what a 'service d'ordre' composed of stalinist stewards really means. All day, the stewards have obviously been anticipating this particular moment. They are very tense, clearly expecting 'trouble'. Above all else they fear what they call 'débordement', i.e. being outflanked on the left. For the last half-mile of the march five or six solid rows of them line up on either side of the demonstrators. Arms linked, they form a massive sheath around the marchers. CGT officials address the bottled-up demonstrators through two powerful loud-speakers mounted on vans, instructing them to disperse quietly via the Boulevard Arago, i.e. to proceed in precisely the opposite direction of the one leading to the Champ de Mars. Other exits from the Place Denfert Rochereau are blocked by lines of stewards linking arms.

On occasions like this, I am told, the Communist Party calls up thousands of its members from the Paris area. It also summons members from miles around, bringing them up by the coachload from places as far away as Rennes, Orleans, Sens, Lille and Limoges. The municipalities under Communist Party control provide further hundreds of these 'stewards' not necessarily Party members, but people dependent on the goodwill of the Party for their jobs and future. Ever since its heyday of participation in the government (1945-47) the Party has had this kind of mass base in the Paris suburbs. It has invariably used it in circumstances like today. On this demonstration there must be at least 10,000 such stewards, possibly twice that number.

The exhortations of the stewards meet with a variable response. Whether they are successful in getting particular groups to disperse via the Boulevard Arago depends of course on the composition of the groups. Most of those which the students have not succeeded in infiltrating obey, although even here some of the younger militants protest: 'We are a million in the streets. Why should we go home?'. Other groups hesitate, vacillate, start arguing. Student speakers climb on walls and shout: 'All those who want to return to the telly, turn down the Boulevard Arago. Those who are for joint worker-student discussions and for developing the struggle, turn down the Boulevard Raspail and proceed to the Champ de Mars'.

Those protesting against the dispersion orders are immediately jumped on by the stewards, denounced as 'provocateurs' and often manhandled. I saw several comrades of the 'Mouvement du 22 Mars' physically assaulted, their portable loud-hailers snatched from their hands and their leaflets torn from them and thrown to the ground. In some sections there seemed to be dozens, in other hundreds, in other thousands of 'provocateurs'. A number of minor punch-ups take place as the stewards are swept aside by these particular contingents. Heated arguments break out, the demonstrators denouncing the Stalinists as 'cops' and as 'the last rampart of the bourgeoisie'.

A respect for facts compels me to admit that most contingents followed the orders of the trade union bureaucrats. The repeated slanders by the CGT and Communist Party leaders had had their effect. The students were trouble makers, 'adventurers', 'dubious elements'. Their proposed action would 'only lead to a massive intervention by the CRS' (who had kept well out of sight throughout the whole of the afternoon). 'This was just a demonstration, not a prelude to Revolution'. Playing ruthlessly on the most backward sections of the crowd, and physically assaulting the more advanced sections, the apparatchniks of the CGT succeeded in getting the bulk of the demonstrators to disperse, often under protest. Thousands went to the Champ de Mars. But hundreds of thousands went home. The Stalinists won the day, but the arguments started will surely reverberate down the months to come.

At about 8.0 pm an episode took place which changed the temper of the last sections of the march, now approaching the dispersal point. A police van suddenly came up one of the streets leading into the Place Denfert Rochereau. It must have strayed from its intended route, or perhaps its driver had assumed that the demonstrators had already dispersed. Seeing the crowd ahead the two uniformed gendarmes in the front seat panicked. Unable to reverse in time in order to retreat, the driver decided that his life hinged on forcing a passage through the thinnest section of the crowd. The vehicle accelerated, hurling itself into the demonstrators at about 50 miles an hour. People scattered wildly in all directions. Several people were knocked down and two were seriously injured. Many more narrowly escaped. The

van was finally surrounded. One of the policemen in the front seat was dragged out and repeatedly punched by the infuriated crowd, determined to lynch him. He was finally rescued, in the nick of time, by the stewards. They more or less carried him, semi-conscious, down a side street where he was passed horizontally, like a battered blood sausage, through an open ground floor window.

To do this, the stewards had had to engage in a running fight with several hundred very angry marchers. The crowd then started rocking the stranded police van. The remaining policeman drew his revolver and fired. People ducked. By a miracle no one was hit. A hundred yards away the bullet made a hole, about 3 feet above ground level, in a window of 'Le Belfort', a big café at 297 Boulevard Raspail. The stewards again rushed to the rescue, forming a barrier between the crowd and the police van, which was allowed to escape down a side street, driven by the policeman who had fired at the crowd.

Hundreds of demonstrators then thronged round the hole in the window of the café. Press photographers were summoned, arrived, duly took their close-ups - none of which, of course, were ever published. (Two days later *l'Humanité* carried a few lines about the episode, at the bottom of a column on p.5.) One effect of the episode is that several thousand more demonstrators decided not to disperse. They turned and marched down towards the Champ de Mars, shouting 'Ils ont tiré à Denfert' (they've shot at us at Denfert). If the incident had taken place an hour earlier, the evening of May 13 might have had a very different complexion.



THE SORBONNE 'SOVIET'

On Saturday May 11, shortly before midnight, Mr. Pompidou, Prime Minister of France, overruled his Minister of the Interior, his Minister of Education, and issued orders to his 'independent' Judiciary. He announced that the police would be withdrawn from the Latin Quarter, that the faculties would re-open on Monday May 13, and that the law would 'reconsider' the question of the students arrested the previous week. It was the biggest political climb-down of this career. For the students, and for many others, it was the living proof that direct action worked. Concessions had been won through struggle which had been unobtainable by other means.

Early on the Monday morning the CRS platoons guarding the entrance to the Sorbonne were discreetly withdrawn. The students moved in, first in small groups, then in hundreds, later in thousands. By midday the occupation was complete. Every 'tricolore' was promptly hauled down, every lecture theatre occupied. Red flags were hoisted from the official flagpoles and from improvised ones at many windows, some overlooking the streets, others the big internal courtyard. Hundreds of feet above the milling students, enormous red and black flags fluttered side by side from the Chapel dome.

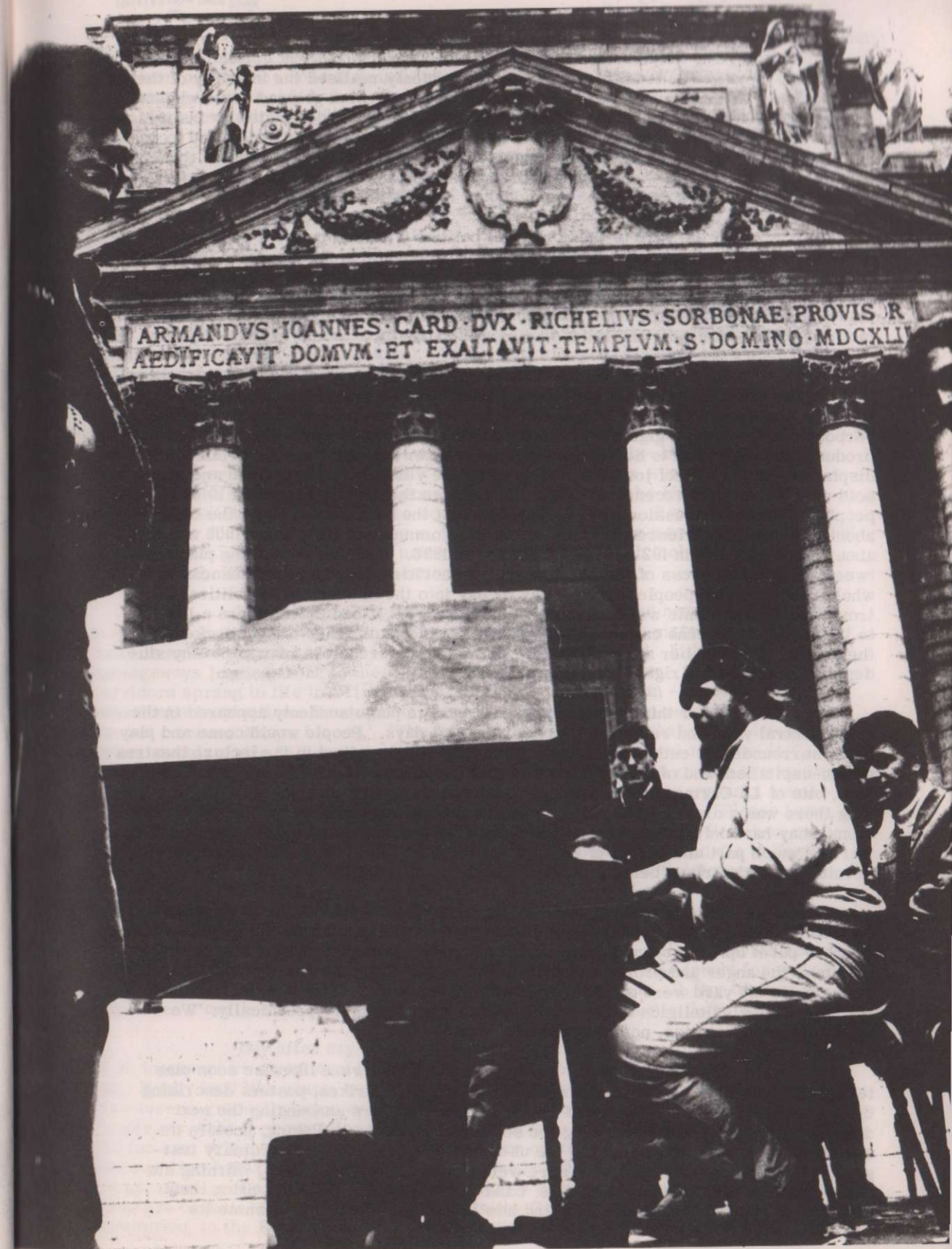
What happened over the next few days will leave a permanent mark on the French educational system, on the structure of French society and - most important of all - on the minds of those who lived and made history during that hectic first fortnight. The Sorbonne was suddenly transformed from the fusty precinct where French capitalism selected and moulded its hierarchs, its technocrats and its administrative bureaucracy into a revolutionary volcano in full eruption whose lava was to spread far and wide, searing the social structure of modern France.

The physical occupation of the Sorbonne was followed by an intellectual explosion of unprecedented violence. Everything, literally everything, was suddenly and simultaneously up for discussion, for question, for challenge. There were no taboos. It is easy to criticize the chaotic upsurge of thoughts, ideas and proposals unleashed in such circumstances. 'Professional revolutionaries' and petty bourgeois philistines criticized to their heart's content. But in so doing they only revealed how they themselves were trapped in the ideology of a previous epoch and were incapable of transcending it. They failed to recognize the tremendous significance of the new, of all that could not be apprehended within their own pre-established intellectual categories. The phenomenon was witnessed again and again, as it doubtless has been in every really great upheaval in history.

Day and night, every lecture theatre was packed out, the seat of continuous, passionate debate on every subject that ever preoccupied thinking humanity. No formal lecturer ever enjoyed so massive an audience, was ever listened to with such rapt attention - or given such short shrift if he talked nonsense.

A kind of order rapidly prevailed. By the second day a notice board had appeared near the front entrance announcing what was being talked about, and where. I noted: 'Organization of the struggle'; 'Political and trade union rights in the University'; 'University crisis or social crisis?'; 'Dossier of the police repression'; 'Self-management'; 'Non-selection' (or how to open the doors of the University to everyone); 'Methods of teaching'; 'Exams', etc. Other lecture theatres were given over to the Students - Workers Liaison Committees, soon to assume great importance. In yet other halls, discussions were under way on 'sexual repression', on 'the colonial question', on 'ideology and mystification'. Any group of people wishing to discuss anything under the sun would just take over one of the lecture theatres or smaller rooms. Fortunately there were dozens of these.

The first impression was of a gigantic lid suddenly lifted, of pent-up thoughts and aspirations suddenly exploding, on being released from the realm of dreams into the realm of the real and the possible. In changing their environment people themselves were changed. Those who had never dared say anything suddenly felt their



thoughts to be the most important thing in the world - and said so. The shy became communicative. The helpless and isolated suddenly discovered that collective power lay in their hands. The traditionally apathetic suddenly realised the intensity of their involvement. A tremendous surge of community and cohesion gripped those who had previously seen themselves as isolated and impotent puppets, dominated by institutions that they could neither control nor understand. People just went up and talked to one another without a trace of self-consciousness. This state of euphoria lasted throughout the whole fortnight I was there. An inscription scrawled on a wall sums it up perfectly: 'Déjà dix jours de bonheur' (ten days of happiness already).

In the yard of the Sorbonne, politics (frowned on for a generation) took over with a vengeance. Literature stalls sprouted up along the whole inner perimeter. Enormous portraits appeared on the internal walls: Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Mao, Castro, Guevara, a revolutionary resurrection breaking the bounds of time and place. Even Stalin put in a transient appearance (above a maoist stall) until it was tactfully suggested to the comrades that he wasn't really at home in such company.

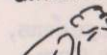
On the stalls themselves every kind of literature suddenly blossomed forth in the summer sunshine: leaflets and pamphlets by anarchists, stalinists, maoists, trotskyists (3 varieties), the PSU and the noncommitted. The yard of the Sorbonne had become a gigantic revolutionary drug-store, in which the most esoteric products no longer had to be kept beneath the counter but could now be prominently displayed. Old issues of journals, yellowed by the years, were unearthed and often sold as well as more recent material. Everywhere there were groups of 10 or 20 people, in heated discussion, people talking about the barricades, about the CRS, about their own experiences, but also about the Commune of 1871, about 1905 and 1917, about the Italian left in 1921 and about France in 1936. A fusion was taking place between the consciousness of the revolutionary minorities and the consciousness of whole new layers of people, dragged day by day into the maelstrom of political controversy. The students were learning within days what it had taken others a lifetime to learn. Many lycéens came to see what it was all about. They too got sucked into the vortex. I remember a boy of 14 explaining to an incredulous man of 60 why students should have the right to depose professors.

Other things also happened. A large piano suddenly appeared in the great central yard and remained there for several days. People would come and play on it, surrounded by enthusiastic supporters. As people talked in the lecture theatres of neo-capitalism and of its techniques of manipulation, strands of Chopin and bars of jazz, bits of La Carmagnole and atonal compositions wafted through the air. One evening there was a drum recital, then some clarinet players took over. These 'diversions' may have infuriated some of the more single-minded revolutionaries, but they were as much part and parcel of the total transformation of the Sorbonne as were the revolutionary doctrines being proclaimed in the lecture halls.

An exhibition of huge photographs of the 'night of the barricades' (in beautiful half-tones) appeared one morning, mounted on stands. No one knew who had put it up. Everyone agreed that it succinctly summarised the horror and glamour, the anger and promise of that fateful night. Even the doors of the Chapel giving on to the yard were soon covered with inscriptions: 'Open this door - Finis, les tabernacles'. 'Religion is the last mystification'. Or more prosaically: 'We want somewhere to piss, not somewhere to pray'

The massive outer walls of the Sorbonne were likewise soon plastered with posters - posters announcing the first sit-in strikes, posters describing the wage rates of whole sections of Paris workers, posters announcing the next demonstrations, posters describing the solidarity marches in Peking, posters denouncing the police repression and the use of CS gas (as well as of ordinary tear-gas) against the demonstrators. There were posters, dozens of them, warning students against the Communist Party's band-wagon jumping tactics, telling them how it had attacked their movement and how it was now seeking to assume its

IN HITLER'S DAY
THEY WOULD HAVE
QUIETED THEM DOWN SOON
ENOUGH!



Yes, the Germans
always had a
high respect
for discipline!



leadership. Political posters in plenty. But also others, proclaiming the new ethos. A big one for instance near the main entrance, boldly proclaimed 'Défense d'interdire' (Forbidding forbidden). And others, equally to the point: 'Only the truth is revolutionary.' 'Our revolution is greater than ourselves'. 'We refuse the role assigned to us, we will not be trained as police dogs.' People's concerns varied but converged. The posters reflected the deeply libertarian prevailing philosophy. 'Humanity will only be happy when the last capitalist has been strangled with the guts of the last bureaucrat.' 'Culture is disintegrating. Create!' 'I take my wishes for reality for I believe in the reality of my wishes', or more simply: 'Creativity, spontaneity, life'.

In the street outside, hundreds of passers-by would stop to read these improvised wall-newspapers. Some gaped. Some sniggered. Some nodded assent. Some argued. Some, summoning their courage, actually entered the erstwhile sacrosanct premises, as they were being exhorted to by numerous posters proclaiming that the Sorbonne was now open to all. Young workers who 'wouldn't have been seen in that place' a month ago now walked in in groups, at first rather self-consciously, later as if they owned the place, which of course they did.

As the days went by, another kind of invasion took place - the invasion by the cynical and the unbelieving, or - more charitably - by those who 'had only come to see'. It gradually gained momentum. At certain stages it threatened to paralyse the serious work being done, part of which had to be hived off to the Faculty of Letters, at Censier, also occupied by the students. It was felt necessary, however, for the doors to be kept open, 24 hours a day. The message certainly spread. Deputations came first from other universities, then from high schools, later from factories and offices, to look, to question, to argue, to study.

The most telling sign, however, of the new and heady climate was to be found on the walls of the Sorbonne corridors. Around the main lecture theatres there is a maze of such corridors: dark, dusty, depressing, and hitherto unnoticed passageways leading from nowhere in particular to nowhere else. Suddenly these corridors sprang to life in a firework of luminous mural wisdom - much of it of Situationist inspiration. Hundreds of people suddenly stopped to read such pearls as: 'Do not consume Marx. Live it.' 'The future will only contain what we put into it now.' 'When examined, we will answer with questions.' 'Professors, you make us feel old.' 'One doesn't compose with a society in decomposition.' 'We must remain the inadapted ones.' 'Workers of all lands, enjoy yourselves.' 'Those who carry out a revolution only half-way through merely dig themselves a tomb (St. Just)'. 'Please leave the P.C. (Communist Party) as clean on leaving as you would like to find it on entering.' 'The tears of the philistine are the nectar of the Gods.' 'Go and die in Naples, with the Club Méditerranée.' Long live communication, down with telecommunication.' 'Masochism today dresses up as reformism.' 'We will claim nothing. We will ask for nothing. We will take. We will occupy.' 'The only outrage to the tomb of the unknown soldier was the outrage that put him there.' 'No, we won't be picked up by the Great Party of the Working Class.' And a big inscription, well displayed: 'Since 1936 I have fought for wage increases. My father, before me, also fought for wage increases. Now I have a telly, a fridge, a Volkswagen. Yet all in all, my life has always been a cunt's life. Don't discuss with the bosses. Eliminate them.'

Day after day the courtyard and corridors are crammed, the scene of an incessant bi-directional flow to every conceivable part of the enormous building. It may look like chaos, but it is the chaos of a beehive or of an anthill. A new structure is gradually being evolved. A canteen has been organized in one big hall. People pay what they can afford for glasses of orange juice, 'menthe', or 'grenadine' - and for ham or sausage rolls. I enquire whether costs are covered and am told they more or less break even. In another part of the building a children's creche has been set up, elsewhere a first-aid station, elsewhere a dormitory. Regular sweeping-up rotas are organized. Rooms are allocated to the Occupation Committee, to the Press Committee, to the Propaganda Committee, to the Student-Worker Liaison Committees,

to the Committees dealing with foreign students, to the Action Committees of Lycéens, to the Committees dealing with the allocation of premises, and to the numerous Commissions undertaking special projects such as the compiling of a dossier on police atrocities, the study of the implications of autonomy, of the examination system, etc. Anyone seeking work can readily find it.

The composition of the Committees was very variable. It often changed from day to day, as the Committees gradually found their feet. To those who pressed for instant solutions to every problem it would be answered: 'Patience, comrade. Give us a chance to evolve an alternative. The bourgeoisie has controlled this university for nearly two centuries. It has solved nothing. We are building from rock bottom. We need a month or two. . .'

Confronted with this tremendous explosion which it had neither foreseen nor been able to control the Communist Party tried desperately to salvage what it could of its shattered reputation. Between May 3rd and May 13th every issue of l'Humanité had carried paragraphs either attacking the students or making slimy innuendoes about them. Now the line suddenly changed.

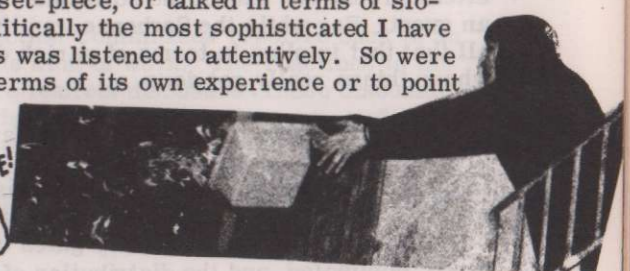
The Party sent dozens of its best agitators into the Sorbonne to 'explain' its case. The case was a simple one. The Party 'supported the students' - even if there were a few 'dubious elements' in their leadership. It 'always had'. It always would.

Amazing scenes followed. Every Stalinist 'agitator' would immediately be surrounded by a large group of well-informed young people, denouncing the Party's counter-revolutionary role. A wallpaper had been put up by the comrades of Voix Ouvrière on which had been posted, day by day, every statement attacking the students to have appeared in l'Humanité or in any of a dozen Party leaflets. The 'agitators' couldn't get a word in edgeways. They would be jumped on (non-violently). 'The evidence was over there, comrade. Would the Party comrades like to come and read just exactly what the Party had been saying not a week ago? Perhaps l'Humanité would like to grant the students space to reply to some of the accusations made against them?' Others in the audience would then bring up the Party's role during the Algerian War, during the miners' strike of 1958, during the years of 'tripartisme' (1945-1947). Wriggle as they tried, the 'agitators' just could not escape this kind of 'instant education'. It was interesting to note that the Party could not entrust this 'salvaging' operation to its younger, student members. Only the 'older comrades' could safely venture into this hornets' nest. So much so that people would say that anyone in the Sorbonne over the age of 40 was either a copper's nark or a stalinist stooge.

The most dramatic periods of the occupation were undoubtedly the 'Assemblées Générales', or plenary sessions, held every night in the giant amphitheatre. This was the soviet, the ultimate source of all decisions, the fount and origin of direct democracy. The amphitheatre could seat up to 5,000 people in its enormous hemicycle, surmounted by three balcony tiers. As often as not every seat was taken and the crowd would flow up the aisles and onto the podium. A black flag and a red one hung over the simple wooden table at which the chairman sat. Having seen meetings of 50 break up in chaos it is an amazing experience to see a meeting of 5,000 get down to business. Real events determined the themes and ensured that most of the talk was down to earth.



blah! blah! blah!



The topic having been decided, everyone was allowed to speak. Most speeches were made from the podium but some from the body of the hall or from the balconies. The loudspeaker equipment usually worked but sometimes didn't. Some speakers could command immediate attention, without even raising their voice. Others would instantly provoke a hostile response by the stridency of their tone, their insincerity or their more or less obvious attempts at manoeuvring the assembly. Anyone who waffled, or reminisced, or came to recite a set-piece, or talked in terms of slogans, was given short shrift by the audience, politically the most sophisticated I have ever seen. Anyone making practical suggestions was listened to attentively. So were those who sought to interpret the movement in terms of its own experience or to point the way ahead.

Most speakers were granted three minutes. Some were allowed much more by popular acclaim. The crowd itself exerted a tremendous control on the platform and on the speakers. A two-way relationship emerged very quickly. The political maturity of the Assembly was shown most strikingly in its rapid realization that booing or cheering during speeches slowed down the Assembly's own deliberations. Positive speeches were loudly cheered - at the end. Demagogic or useless ones were impatiently swept aside. Conscious revolutionary minorities played an important catalytic role in these deliberations but never sought - at least the more intelligent ones - to impose their will on the mass body. Although in the early stages the Assembly had its fair share of exhibitionists, provocateurs and nuts, the overhead costs of direct democracy were not as heavy as one might have expected.

There were moments of excitement and moments of exultation. On the night of May 13th, after the massive march through the streets of Paris, Daniel Cohn-Bendit confronted J.M. Catala, general secretary of the Union of Communist Students in front of the packed auditorium. The scene remains printed in my mind.

'Explain to us', Cohn-Bendit said, 'why the Communist Party and the CGT told their militants to disperse at Denfert Rochereau, why it prevented them joining up with us for a discussion at the Champ de Mars?'

'Simple, really', sneered Catala. 'The agreement concluded between the CGT, the CFDT, the UNEF and the other sponsoring organizations stipulated that dispersal would take place at a predetermined place. The Joint Sponsoring Committee had not sanctioned any further developments. . .'

'A revealing answer', replied Cohn-Bendit, 'the organizations hadn't foreseen that we would be a million in the streets. But life is bigger than the organizations. With a million people almost anything is possible. You say the Committee hadn't sanctioned anything further. On the day of the Revolution, comrade, you will doubtless tell us to forego it "because it hasn't been sanctioned by the appropriate sponsoring Committee". . .'

This brought the house down. The only ones who didn't rise to cheer were a few dozen Stalinists. Also, revealingly, those Trotskyists who tacitly accepted the Stalinist conceptions - and whose only quarrel with the CP is that it had excluded them from being one of the 'sponsoring organizations.'

That same night the Assembly took three important decisions. From now on the Sorbonne would constitute itself as a revolutionary headquarters ('Smolny', someone shouted). Those who worked there would devote their main efforts not to a mere re-organization of the educational system but to a total subversion of bourgeois society. From now on the University would be open to all those who subscribed to these aims. The proposals having been accepted the audience rose to a man and sang the loudest, most impassioned 'Internationale' I have ever heard. The echoes must have reverberated as far as the Elysée Palace, on the other side of the River Seine. .

THE CENSIER REVOLUTIONARIES

At the same time as the students occupied the Sorbonne, they also took over the 'Centre Censier' (the new Paris University Faculty of Letters).

Censier is an enormous, ultra-modern, steel-concrete-and-glass affair situated at the south-east corner of the Latin Quarter. Its occupation attracted less attention than did that of the Sorbonne. It was to prove, however, just as significant an event. For while the Sorbonne was the shop window of revolutionary Paris - with all that that implies in terms of garish display - Censier was its dynamo, the place where things really got done.

To many, the Paris May Days must have seemed an essentially nocturnal affair: nocturnal battles with the CRS, nocturnal barricades, nocturnal debates in the great amphitheatres. But this was but one side of the coin. While some argued late into the Sorbonne night, others went to bed early for in the mornings they would be handing out leaflets at factory gates or in the suburbs, leaflets that had to be drafted, typed, duplicated, and the distribution of which had to be carefully organized. This patient, systematic work was done at Censier. It contributed in no small measure to giving the new revolutionary consciousness articulate expression.

Soon after Censier had been occupied a group of activists commandeered a large part of the third floor. This space was to be the headquarters of their proposed 'worker-student action committees'. The general idea was to establish links with groups of workers, however small, who shared the general libertarian-revolutionary outlook of this group of students. Contact having been made, workers and students would cooperate in the joint drafting of leaflets. The leaflets would discuss the immediate problems of particular groups of workers, but in the light of what the students had shown to be possible. A given leaflet would then be jointly distributed by workers and students, outside the particular factory or office to which it referred. In some instances the distribution would have to be undertaken by students alone, in others hardly a single student would be needed.

What brought the Censier comrades together was a deeply felt sense of the revolutionary potentialities of the situation and the knowledge that they had no time to waste. They all felt the pressing need for direct action propaganda, and that the urgency of the situation required of them that they transcend any doctrinal differences they might have with one another. They were all intensely political people. By and large, their politics were those of that new and increasingly important historical species: the ex-members of one or another revolutionary organization.

What were their views? Basically they boiled down to a few simple propositions. What was needed just now was a rapid, autonomous development working class struggle, the setting up of elected strike committees which would link union and non-union members in all strike-bound plants and enterprises, regular meetings of the strikers so that the fundamental decisions remained in the hands of the rank and file, workers' defence committees to defend pickets from police intimidation, a constant dialogue with the revolutionary students aimed at restoring to the working class its own tradition of direct democracy and its own aspiration to self-management (auto-gestion), usurped by the bureaucracies of the trade unions and the political parties.

For a whole week the various trotskyist and maoist factions didn't even notice what was going on at Censier. They spent their time in public and often acrimonious debates at the Sorbonne as to who could provide the best leadership. Meanwhile, the comrades at Censier were steadily getting on with the work. The majority of them had 'been through' either stalinist or trotskyist organizations. They had left behind them all ideas to the effect that 'intervention' was meaningful only in terms of potential recruitment to their own particular group. All recognized the need for a widely-based and moderately structured revolutionary movement, but none of them saw the building of such a movement as an immediate, all important task, on which propaganda should immediately be centered.

Duplicators belonging to 'subversive elements' were brought in. University duplicators were commandeered. Stocks of paper and ink were obtained from various sources and by various means. Leaflets began to pour out, first in hundreds, then in thousands, then in tens of thousands as links were established with one group of rank and file workers after another. On the first day alone, Renault, Citroen, Air France Boussac, the Nouvelles Messageries de Presse, Rhone-Poulenc and the RATP (Métro) were contacted. The movement then snowballed.

Every evening at Censier, the Action Committees reported back to an 'Assemblée Générale' devoted exclusively to this kind of work. The reactions to the distribution were assessed, the content of future leaflets discussed. These discussions would usually be led off by the worker contact who would describe the impact of the leaflet on his workmates. The most heated discussions centered on whether direct attacks should be made on the leaders of the CGT or whether mere suggestions as to what was needed to win would be sufficient to expose everything the union leaders had (or hadn't) done and everything they stood for. The second viewpoint prevailed.

The leaflets were usually very short, never more than 200 or 300 words. They nearly all started by listing the workers' grievances - or just by describing their conditions of work. They would end by inviting workers to call at Censier or at the Sorbonne. 'These places are now yours. Come there to discuss your problems with others. Take a hand yourselves in making known your problems and demands to those around you'. Between this kind of opening and this kind of conclusion, most leaflets contained one or two key political points.

The response was instantaneous. More and more workers dropped in to draft joint leaflets with the students. Soon there was no lecture room big enough for the daily 'Assemblée Générale'. The students learned a great deal from the workers' self-discipline and from the systematic way in which they presented their reports. It was all so different from the 'in-fighting' of the political sects. There was general agreement that these were the finest lectures ever held at Censier!

Among the more telling lines of these leaflets, I noted the following:

Air France leaflet: 'We refuse to accept a degrading 'modernisation' which means we are constantly watched and have to submit to conditions which are harmful to our health, to our nervous systems and an insult to our status of human beings... We refuse to entrust our demands any longer to professional trade union leaders. Like the students, we must take the control of our affairs into our own hands'.

Renault leaflet: 'If we want our wage increases and our claims concerning conditions of work to be secure, if we don't want them constantly threatened, we must now struggle for a fundamental change in society...As workers we should ourselves seek to control the operation of our enterprises. Our objectives are similar to those of the students. The management (gestion) of industry and the management of the university should be democratically ensured by those who work there...'

Rhone-Poulenc leaflet: 'Up till now we tried to solve our problems through petitions, partial struggles, the election of better leaders. This has led us nowhere. The action of the students has shown us that only rank and file action could compel the authorities to retreat...the students are challenging the whole purpose of bourgeois education. They want to take the fundamental decisions themselves. So should we. We should decide the purpose of production, and at whose cost production will be carried out.'

District leaflet (distributed in the streets at Boulogne Billancourt): 'The government fears the extension of the movement. It fears the developing unity between workers and students. Pompidou has announced that "the government will defend the Republic". The Army and police are being prepared. De Gaulle will speak on the 24th. Will he send the CRS to clear pickets out of strikebound plants? Be prepared. In workshops and faculties, think in terms of self-defence...'

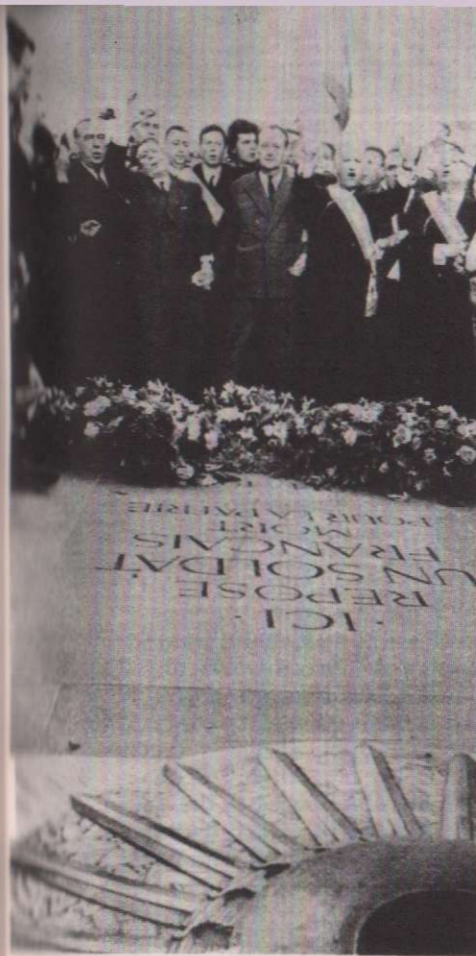
Every day dozens of such leaflets were discussed, typed, duplicated, distributed. Every evening we heard of the response: 'The blokes think it's tremendous. It's just what they are thinking. The union officials never talk like this'. 'The blokes liked the leaflet. They are sceptical about the 12%. They say prices will go up and that we'll lose it all in a few months. Some say let's push all together now and take on the lot'. 'The leaflet certainly started the lads talking. They've never had so much to say. The officials had to wait their turn to speak...'

I vividly remember a young printing worker who said one night that these meetings were the most exciting thing that had ever happened to him. All his life he had dreamed of meeting people who thought and spoke like this. But every time he thought he had met one all they were interested in was what they could get out of him. This was the first time he had been offered disinterested help.

I don't know what has happened at Censier since the end of May. When I left, sundry Trots were beginning to move in, 'to politicize the leaflets' (by which I presume they meant that the leaflets should now talk about "the need to build the revolutionary Party"). If they succeed - which I doubt, knowing the calibre of the Censier comrades - it will be a tragedy.

The leaflets were in fact political. During the whole of my short stay in France I saw nothing more intensely and relevantly political (in the best sense of the term) than the sustained campaign emanating from Censier, a campaign for constant control of the struggle from below, for self-defence, for workers' management of production, for popularising the concept of workers' councils, for explaining to one and all the tremendous relevance, in a revolutionary situation, of revolutionary demands, of organised self-activity, of collective self-reliance.

As I left Censier I could not help thinking how the place epitomized the cirsis of modern bureaucratic capitalism. Censier is no educational slum. It is an ultra-modern building, one of the show-pieces of Gaullist 'grandeur'. It has closed-circuit television in the lecture theatres, modern plumbing, and slot machines distributing 24 different kinds of food - in sterilised containers - and 10 different kinds of drink. Over 90% of the students there are of petty bourgeois or bourgeois backgrounds. Yet such is their rejection of the society that nurtured them that they were working duplicators 24 hours a day, turning out a flood of revolutionary literature of a kind no modern city has ever had pushed into it before. This kind of activity had transformed these students and had contributed to transforming the environment around them. They were simultaneously disrupting the social structure and having the time of their lives. In the words of a slogan scrawled on the wall: 'On n'est pas là pour s'emmerder'



MALRAUX, MINISTER OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS ATTENDS A CEREMONY.



GETTING TOGETHER

When the news of the first factory occupation (that of the Sud Aviation plant at Nantes) reached the Sorbonne - late during the night of Tuesday, May 14 - there were scenes of indescribable enthusiasm. Sessions were interrupted for the announcement. Everyone seemed to sense the significance of what had just happened. After a full minute of continuous, delirious cheering, the audience broke into a synchronous, rhythmical clapping, apparently reserved for great occasions.

On Thursday, May 16 the Renault Factories at Cléon (near Rouen) and at Flins (North West of Paris) were occupied. Excited groups in the Sorbonne yard remained glued to their transistors as hour by hour news came over of further occupations. Enormous posters were put up, both inside and outside the Sorbonne, with the most up-to-date information of which factories had been occupied: The Nouvelles Messageries de Presse in Paris, Kléber-Colombes at Caudebec, Dresser-Dujardin at Le Havre, the naval shipyard at Le Trait... and finally the Renault works at Boulogne Billancourt. Within 48 hours the task had to be abandoned. No notice board or panel of notice boards - was large enough. At last the students felt that the battle had really been joined.

Early on the Friday afternoon an emergency 'General Assembly' was held. The meeting decided to send a big deputation to the occupied Renault works at Billancourt. Its aim was to establish contact, express student solidarity and, if possible, discuss common problems. The march was scheduled to leave the Place de la Sorbonne at 6 pm.

At about 5 pm thousands of leaflets were suddenly distributed in the amphitheatres, in the Sorbonne yard and in the streets around. They were signed by the Renault Bureau of the CGT. The Communist Party had been working... fast. The leaflets read:

'We have just heard that students and teachers are proposing to set out this afternoon in the direction of Renault. This decision was taken without consulting the appropriate trade union sections of the CGT, CFDT, and FO.

'We greatly appreciate the solidarity of the students and teachers in the common struggle against the "pouvoir personnel" (i.e. de Gaulle) and the employers but are opposed to any ill-judged initiative which might threaten our developing movement and facilitate a provocation which would lead to a diversion by the government.

'We strongly advise the organisers of this demonstration against proceeding with their plans.

'We intend, together with the workers now struggling for their claims, to lead our own strike. We refuse any external intervention, in conformity with the declaration jointly signed by the CGT, CFDT and FO unions, and approved this morning by 23,000 workers belonging to the factory.'

The distortion and dishonesty of this leaflet defy description. No one intended to instruct the workers how to run the strike and no student would have the presumption to seek to assume its leadership. All that the students wanted was to express solidarity with the workers in what was now a common struggle against the state and the employing class.

The CGT leaflet came like an icy shower to the less political students and to all those who still had illusions in Stalinism. 'They won't let us get through'. 'The workers don't want to talk with us'. The identification of workers with 'their' organizations is very hard to break down. Several hundred who had intended to march to Billancourt were probably put off. The UNEF vacillated, reluctant to lead the march in direct violation of the expressed wishes of the CGT.

Finally some 1500 people set out, under a single banner, hastily prepared by some maoist students. The banner proclaimed: 'The strong hands of the

working class must now take over the torch from the fragile hands of the students.' Many joined the march who were not maoists and who didn't necessarily agree with this particular formulation of its objectives.

Although small when compared to other marches, this was certainly a most political one. Practically everyone on it belonged to one or other of the 'groupuscules': a spontaneous united front of maoists, trotskysts, anarchists, the comrades of the Mouvement du 22 Mars and various others. Everyone knew exactly what he was doing. It was this that was so to infuriate the Communist Party.

The march sets off noisily, crosses the Boulevard St. Michel, and passes in front of the occupied Odéon Theatre (where several hundred more joyfully join it). It then proceeds at a very brisk pace down the rue de Vaugirard, the longest street in Paris, towards the working class districts to the South West of the city, growing steadily in size and militancy as it advances. It is important we reach the factory before the Stalinists have time to mobilise their big battalions...

Slogans such as 'Avec nous, chez Renault' (come with us to Renault) 'Le pouvoir est dans la rue' (power lies in the street), 'Le pouvoir aux ouvriers' (power to the workers) are shouted lustily, again and again. The maoists shout 'A bas le gouvernement gaulliste anti-populaire de chômage et de misère' - a long and politically equivocal slogan but one eminently suited to collective shouting. The Internationale bursts out repeatedly, sung this time by people who seem to know the words - even those of the second verse!

By the time we have marched the five miles to Issy-les-Moulineaux it is already dark. Way behind us now are the bright lights of the Latin Quarter and of the fashionable Paris known to tourists. We go through small, poorly lit streets, the uncollected rubbish piled high in places. Dozens of young people join us en route, attracted by the noise and the singing of revolutionary songs such as 'La Jeune Garde', 'Zimmerwald', and the song of the Partisans. 'Chez Renault, chez Renault' the marchers shout. People congregate in the doors of the bistros, or peer out of the windows of crowded flats to watch us pass. Some look on in amazement but many - possibly a majority - now clap or wave encouragement. In some streets many Algerians line the pavement. Some join in the shouting of 'CRS - SS'; 'Charonne'; 'A bas l'Etat policier'. They have not forgotten. Most look on shyly or smile in an embarrassed way. Very few join the March.

On we go, a few miles more. There isn't a gendarme in sight. We cross the Seine and eventually slow down as we approach a square beyond which lie the Renault works. The streets here are very badly lit. There is a sense of intense excitement in the air.

We suddenly come up against a lorry, parked across most of the road, and fitted with loudspeaker equipment. The march stops. On the lorry stands a CGT official. He speaks for 5 minutes. In somewhat chilly tones he says how pleased he is to see us. 'Thank you for coming, comrades. We appreciate your solidarity. But please no provocations. Don't go too near the gates as the management would use it as an excuse to call the police. And go home soon. It's cold and you'll need all your strength in the days to come'.

The students have brought their own loudhailers. One or two speak, briefly. They take note of the comments of the comrade from the CGT. They have no intention of provoking anyone, no wish to usurp anyone's functions. We then slowly but quite deliberately move forwards into the square, on each side of the lorry, drowning the protests of about a hundred Stalinists in a powerful 'Internationale'. Workers in neighbouring cafés come out and join us. This time the Party had not had time to mobilise its militants. It could not physically isolate us.

TOCCUPATION

TRAVAILLEUR

Part of the factory now looms up right ahead of us, three storeys high on our left, two storeys high on our right. In front of us, there is a giant metal gate, closed and bolted. A large first floor window to our right is crowded with workers. The front row sit with their legs dangling over the sill. Several seem in their teens; one of them waves a big red flag. There are no 'tricolores' in sight - no 'dual allegiance' as in other occupied places I had seen. Several dozen more workers are on the roofs of the two buildings.

We wave. They wave back. We sing the 'Internationale'. They join us. We give the clenched fist salute. They do likewise. Everybody cheers. Contact has been made.

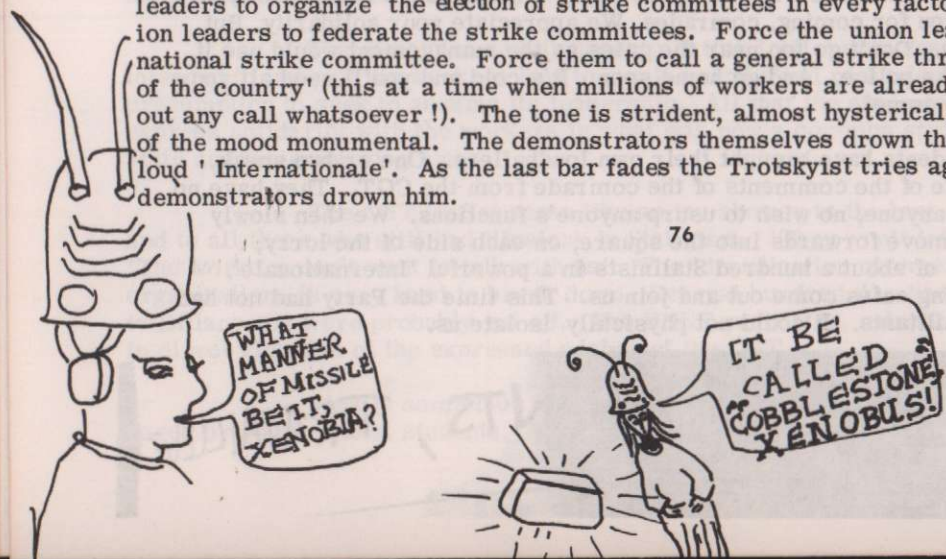
An interesting exchange then takes place. A group of demonstrators starts shouting 'Les usines aux ouvriers' (the factories to the workers). The slogan spreads like wildfire through the crowd. The maoists, now in a definite minority, are rather annoyed. (According to Chairman Mao, workers' control is a petty-bourgeois, anarcho-syndicalist deviation.) 'Les usines aux ouvriers'...ten, twenty times the slogan reverberates round the place Nationale, taken up by a crowd now some 3000 strong.

As the shouting subsides, a lone voice from one of the Renault roofs shouts back: 'La Sorbonne aux Etudiants'. Other workers on the same roof take it up. Then those on the other roof. By the volume of their voices they must now be at least a hundred of them, on top of each building. There is then a moment of silence. Everyone thinks the exchange has come to an end. But one of the demonstrators starts chanting: 'La Sorbonne aux ouvriers'. Amid general laughter, everyone joins in.

We start talking. A rope is quickly passed down from the window, a bucket at the end of it. Bottles of beer and packets of fags are passed up. Also revolutionary leaflets. Also bundles of papers (mainly copies of 'Servir le Peuple' - a maoist journal carrying a big title 'Vive la CGT'). At street level there are a number of gaps in the metal facade of the building. Groups of students cluster at these half-dozen openings and talk to groups of workers on the other side. They discuss wages, conditions, the CRS, what the lads inside need most, how the students can help. The men talk freely. They are not Party members. They think the constant talk of provocateurs a bit far fetched. But the machines must be protected. We point out that two or three students inside the factory, escorted by the strike committee, couldn't possibly damage the machines. They agree. We contrast the widely open doors of the Sorbonne with the heavy locks and bolts on the Renault gates - closed by the CGT officials to prevent the ideological contamination of 'their' militants. How silly, we say, to have to talk through these stupid little slits in the wall. Again they agree. They will put it to their 'dirigeants' (leaders). No one seems, as yet, to think beyond this.

There is then a diversion. A hundred yards away a member of the FER gets up on a parked car and starts making a speech through a loudhailer. The intervention is completely out of tune with the dialogue that is just starting. It's the same gramophone record we have been hearing all week at the Sorbonne. 'Call on the union leaders to organize the election of strike committees in every factory. Force the union leaders to federate the strike committees. Force the union leaders to set up a national strike committee. Force them to call a general strike throughout the whole of the country' (this at a time when millions of workers are already on strike without any call whatsoever!). The tone is strident, almost hysterical, the misjudging of the mood monumental. The demonstrators themselves drown the speaker in a loud 'Internationale'. As the last bar fades the Trotskyist tries again. Again the demonstrators drown him.

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INTERVIEW WITH GEORGES SEGUY, GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE CGT, APPEARING IN L'HUMANITE, MONDAY, MAY 20TH. IT WAS CONDUCTED OVER THE EUROPE NO. 1 WIRELESS NETWORK. IN THESE INTERVIEWS, VARIOUS LISTENERS PHONED QUESTIONS IN DIRECTLY. THE FOLLOWING EXCHANGES ARE WORTH RECORDING.

Question: Mr. Séguy, the workers on strike are everywhere saying that they will go the whole hog. What do you mean by this? What are your objectives?

Answer: The strike is so powerful that the workers obviously mean to obtain the maximum concessions at the end of such a movement. The whole hog for us, trade unionists, means winning the demands for which we have always fought, but which the government and the employers have always refused to consider. They have opposed an obtuse intransigence to the proposals for negotiations which we have repeatedly made.

The whole hog means a general rise in wages (no wages less than 600 francs per month), guaranteed employment, an earlier retirement age, reduction of working hours without loss of wages and the defence and extension of trade union rights within the factory. I am not putting these demands in any particular order because we attach the same importance to all of them.

Question: If I am not mistaken the statutes of the CGT declare its aims to be the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement by socialism. In the present circumstances, that you have yourself referred to as 'exceptional' and 'important', why doesn't the CGT seize this unique chance of calling for its fundamental objectives?

Answer: This is a very interesting question. I like it very much. It is true that the CGT offers the workers a concept of trade unionism that we consider the most revolutionary insofar as its final objective is the end of the employing class and of wage labour. It is true that this is the first of our statutes. It remains fundamentally the CGT's objective. But can the present movement reach this objective? If it became obvious that it could, we would be ready to assume our responsibilities. It remains to be seen whether all the social strata involved in the present movement are ready to go that far.

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Question: Since last week's events I have gone everywhere where people are arguing. I went this afternoon to the Odéon Theatre. Masses of people were discussing there. I can assure you that all the classes who suffer from the present regime were represented there. When I asked whether people thought that the movement should go further than the small demands put forward by the trade unions for the last 10 or 20 years, I brought the house down. I therefore think that it would be criminal to miss the present opportunity. It would be criminal because sooner or later this will have to be done. The conditions of today might allow us to do it peacefully and calmly and will perhaps never come back. I think this call must be made by you and the other political organizations. These political organizations are not your business, of course, but the CGT is a revolutionary organization. You must bring out your revolutionary flag. The workers are astounded to see you so timid.

Answer: While you were bathing in the Odéon fever, I was in the factories. Amongst workers. I assure you that the answer I am giving you is the answer of a leader of a great trade union, which claims to have assumed all its responsibilities, but which does not confuse its wishes with reality.

A caller: I would like to speak to Mr. Séguy. My name is Duvauchel. I am the director of the Sud Aviation factory at Nantes.

Séguy: Good morning, sir.

Duvauchel: Good morning, Mr. General Secretary. I would like to know what you think of the fact that for the last 4 days I have been sequestered, together with about 20 other managerial staff, inside the Sud Aviation factory at Nantes.

Séguy: Has anyone raised a hand against you?

Duvauchel: No. But I am prevented from leaving despite the fact that the general manager of the firm has intimated that the firm was prepared to make positive proposals as soon as free access to its factory could be resumed, and first of all to its managerial staff.

Séguy: Have you asked to leave the factory?

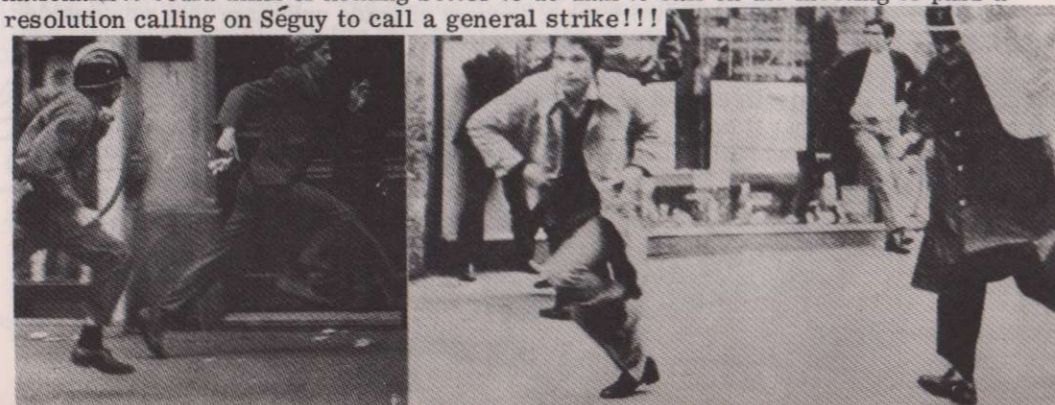
Duvauchel: Yes!

Séguy: Was permission refused?

Duvauchel: Yes!

Séguy: Then I must refer you to the declaration I made yesterday at the CGT's press conference. I stated that I disapproved of such activities. We are taking the necessary steps to see they are not repeated.

But enough is enough. The Revolution itself will doubtless be denounced by the Stalinists as a provocation! By way of an epilogue it is worth recording that at a packed meeting of revolutionary students, held at the Mutualité on Thursday, May 9, a spokesman of the Trotskyist Organisation Communiste Internationaliste could think of nothing better to do than to call on the meeting to pass a resolution calling on Séguy to call a general strike!!!



This has undoubtedly been the greatest revolutionary upheaval in Western Europe since the days of the Paris Commune. Hundreds of thousands of students have fought pitched battles with the police. Nine million workers have been on strike. The red flag of revolt has flown over occupied factories, universities, building sites, shipyards, primary and secondary schools, pit heads, railway stations, department stores, docked transatlantic liners, theatres, hotels. The Paris Opéra, the Folies Bergères and the building of the National Council for Scientific Research were taken over as were the headquarters of the French Football Federation - whose aim was clearly perceived as being 'to prevent ordinary footballers enjoying football'.

Virtually every layer of French society has been involved to some extent or other. Hundreds of thousands of people of all ages have discussed every aspect of life in packed-out, non-stop meetings in every available schoolroom and lecture hall. Boys of 14 have invaded a primary school for girls shouting 'Liberté pour les filles'. Even such traditionally reactionary enclaves as the Faculties of Medicine and Law have been shaken from top to bottom, their hallowed procedures and institutions challenged and found wanting. Millions have taken a hand in making history. This is the stuff of revolution.

Under the influence of the revolutionary students, thousands began to query the whole principle of hierarchy. The students had questioned it where it seemed the most 'natural': in the realms of teaching and knowledge. They proclaimed that democratic self-management was possible - and to prove it began to practice it themselves. They denounced the monopoly of information and produced millions of leaflets to break it. They attacked some of the main pillars of contemporary 'civilisation': the barriers between manual workers and intellectuals, the consumer society, the 'sanctity' of the university and of other founts of capitalist culture and wisdom.

Within a matter of days the tremendous creative potentialities of the people suddenly erupted. The boldest and most realistic ideas - and they are usually the same - were advocated, argued, applied. Language, rendered stale by decades of bureaucratic mumbo-jumbo, eviscerated by those who manipulate it for advertising purposes, suddenly reappeared as something new and fresh. People reappropriated it in all its fullness. Magnificently apposite and poetic slogans emerged from the anonymous crowd. Children explained to their elders what the function of education should be. The educators were educated. Within a few days, young people of 20 attained a level of understanding and a political and tactical sense which many who had been in the revolutionary movement for 30 years or more were still sadly lacking.

The tumultuous development of the students' struggle triggered off the first factory occupations. It transformed both the relation of forces in society and the image, in people's minds, of established institutions and of established leaders. It compelled the State to reveal both its oppressive nature and its fundamental incoherence. It exposed the utter emptiness of Government, Parliament, Administration - and of ALL the political parties. Unarmed students had forced the Establishment to drop its mask, to sweat with fear, to resort to the police club and to the gas grenade. Students finally compelled the bureaucratic leaderships of the 'working class organizations' to reveal themselves as the ultimate custodians of the established order.

But the revolutionary movement did still more. It fought its battles in Paris, not in some under-developed country, exploited by imperialism. In a glorious few weeks the actions of students and young workers dispelled the myth of the well-organized, well-oiled modern capitalist society, from which radical conflict had been eliminated and in which only marginal problems remained to be solved. Administrators who had been administering everything were suddenly shown to have had a grasp of nothing. Planners who had planned everything showed themselves incapable of ensuring the endorsement of their plans by those to whom they applied.

This most modern movement should allow real revolutionaries to shed a number of the ideological encumbrances which in the past had hampered revolutionary activity. It wasn't hunger which drove the students to revolt. There wasn't an 'economic crisis' even in the loosest sense of the term. The revolt had nothing to do with 'under consumption' or with 'over production'. The 'falling rate of profit' just didn't come into the picture. Moreover the student movement wasn't based on economic demands. On the contrary, the movement only found its real stature, an only evoked its tremendous response, when it went beyond the economic demands within which official student unionism had for so long sought to contain it (incidentally with the blessing of all the political parties and 'revolutionary' groups of the 'left'). And conversely it was by confining the workers' struggles to purely economic objectives that the trade union bureaucrats have so far succeeded in coming to the assistance of the regime.

The present movement has shown that the fundamental contradiction of modern bureaucratic capitalism isn't the 'anarchy of the market'. It isn't the 'contradiction between the forces of production and the property relations'. The central conflict to which all others are related is the conflict between order-givers (dirigeants) and order-takers (exécutants). The insoluble contradiction which tears the guts out of modern capitalist society is the one which compels it to exclude people from the management of their own activities and which at the same time compels it to solicit their participation, without which it would collapse. These tendencies find expression on the one hand in the attempt of the bureaucrats to convert men into objects (by violence, mystification, new manipulation techniques - or 'economic' carrots) and, on the other hand, in mankind's refusal to allow itself to be treated in this way.

The French events show clearly something that all revolutions have shown, but which apparently has again and again to be learned anew. There is no 'inbuilt revolutionary perspective', no 'gradual increase of contradiction', no 'progressive development of a revolutionary mass consciousness'. What are given are the contradictions and the conflicts we have described and the fact that modern bureaucratic society more or less inevitably produces periodic 'accidents' which disrupt its functioning. These both provoke popular intervention and provide the people with opportunities for asserting themselves and for changing the social order. The functioning of bureaucratic capitalism creates the conditions within which revolutionary consciousness may appear. These conditions are an integral part of the whole alienating hierarchical and oppressive social structure. Whenever people struggle, sooner or later they are compelled to question the whole of that social structure.

We can't deal here at length with what is now an important problem in France, namely the creation of a new kind of revolutionary movement. Things would indeed have been different if such a movement had existed, strong enough to outwit the bureaucratic manoeuvres, alert enough day by day to expose the duplicity of the 'left' leaderships, deeply enough implanted to explain to the workers the real meaning of the students' struggle, to propagate the idea of autonomous strike committees (linking up union and non-union members), of workers' management of production and of workers' councils. Many things which could have been done weren't done because there wasn't such a movement. The way the students' own struggle was unleashed shows that such an organization could have played a most important catalytic role without automatically becoming a bureaucratic 'leadership'. But such regrets are futile. The non-existence of such a movement is no accident. If it had been formed during the previous period it certainly wouldn't have been the kind of movement of which we are speaking. Even taking the 'best' of the small organizations - and multiplying its numbers a hundredfold - wouldn't have met the requirements of the current situation. When confronted with the test of events all the 'left' groups just continued playing their old gramophone records. Whatever their merits as depositories of the cold ashes of the revolution - a task

they have now carried out for several decades - they proved incapable of snapping out of their old ideas and routines, incapable of learning or of forgetting anything. ¹

The new revolutionary movement will have to be built from the new elements (students and workers) who have understood the real significance of current events. The revolution must step into the great political void revealed by the crisis of the old society. It must develop a voice, a face, a paper - and it must do it soon.

We can understand the reluctance of some students to form such an organization. They feel there is a contradiction between action and thought, between spontaneity and organization. Their hesitation is fed by the whole of their previous experience. They have seen how thought could become sterilising dogma, organization become bureaucracy or lifeless ritual, speech become a means of mystification, a revolutionary idea become a rigid and stereotyped programme. Through their actions, their boldness, their reluctance to consider longer-term aims they had broken out of this straight-jacket. But this isn't enough.

Moreover many of them had sampled the traditional 'left' groups. In all their fundamental aspects these groups remain trapped within the ideological and organizational frameworks of bureaucratic capitalism. They have programmes fixed once and for all, leaders who utter fixed speeches, whatever the changing reality around them, organizational forms which mirror those of existing society. Such groups reproduce within their own ranks the division between order-takers and order-givers, between those who 'know' and those who don't, the separation between scholastic pseudo-theory and real life. They would even like to impose this division into the working class, whom they all aspire to lead, because (and I was told this again and again) 'the workers are only capable of developing a trade union consciousness'.

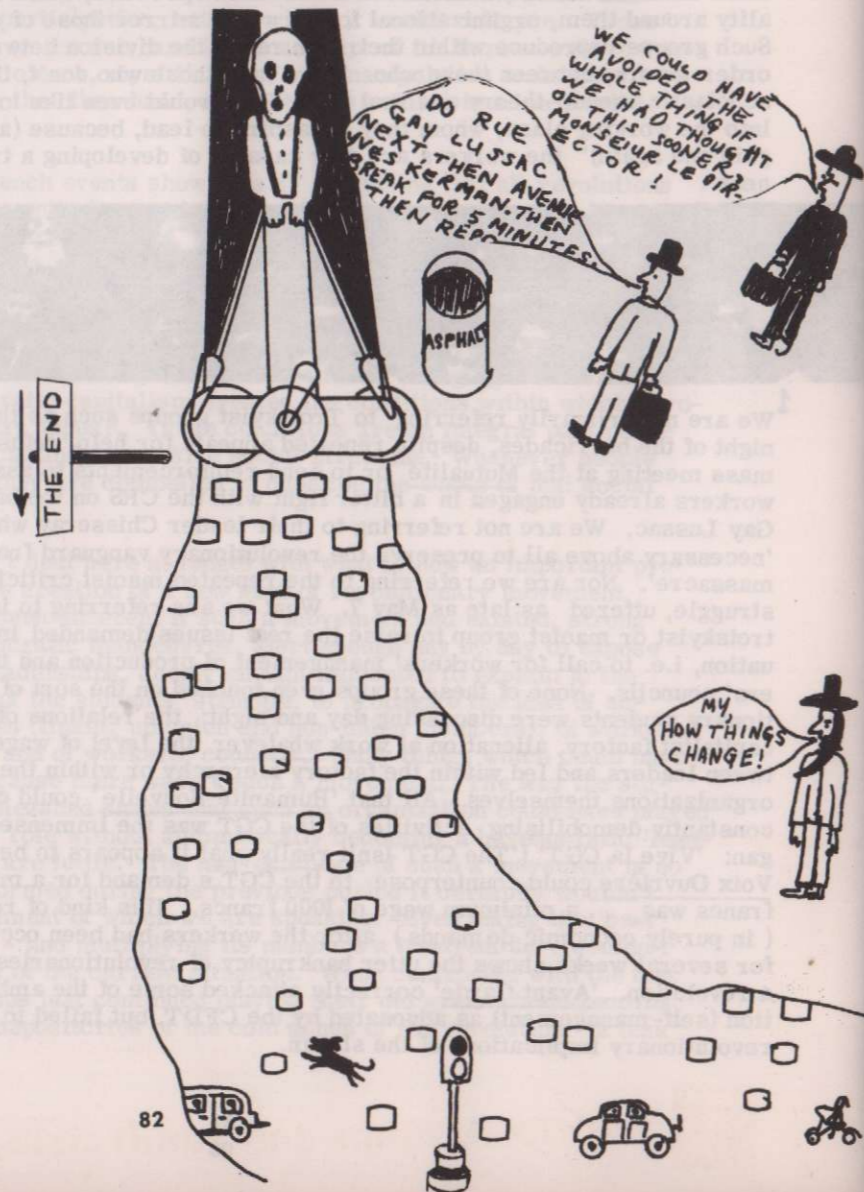


¹ We are not primarily referring to Trotskyist groups such as the FER which on the night of the barricades, despite repeated appeals for help, refused to cancel their mass meeting at the Mutualité or to send reinforcements to assist students and workers already engaged in a bitter fight with the CRS on the barricades of the rue Gay Lussac. We are not referring to their leader Chisseray who claimed it was 'necessary above all to preserve the revolutionary vanguard from an unnecessary massacre'. Nor are we referring to the repeated maoist criticisms of the students' struggle, uttered as late as May 7. What we are referring to is the inability of any trotskyist or maoist group to raise the real issues demanded in a revolutionary situation, i.e. to call for workers' management of production and the formation of workers' councils. None of these groups even touched on the sort of questions the revolutionary students were discussing day and night: the relations of production in the capitalist factory, alienation at work whatever the level of wages, the division between leaders and led within the factory hierarchy or within the 'working class' organizations themselves. All that 'Humanité Nouvelle' could counterpose to the constantly demobilising activities of the CGT was the immensely demystifying slogan: 'Vive la CGT' ('The CGT isn't really what it appears to be, comrade'. All that Voix Ouvrière could counterpose to the CGT's demand for a minimum wage of 600 francs was . . . a minimum wage of 1000 francs. This kind of revolutionary auction (in purely economic demands) after the workers had been occupying their factories for several weeks shows the utter bankruptcy of revolutionaries who fail to recognize a revolution. 'Avant Garde' correctly attacked some of the ambiguities of auto-gestion (self-management) as advocated by the CFDT, but failed to point out the deeply revolutionary implications of the slogan.

But these students are wrong. One doesn't get beyond bureaucratic organization by denying all organization. One doesn't challenge the sterile rigidity of finished programmes by refusing to define oneself in terms of aims and methods. One doesn't refute dead dogma by the condemnation of all theoretical reflexion. The students and young workers can't just stay where they are. To accept these 'contradictions' as valid and as something which cannot be transcended is to accept the essence of bureaucratic capitalist ideology. It is to accept the prevailing philosophy and the prevailing reality. It is to integrate the revolution into an established historical order.

If the revolution is only an explosion lasting a few days (or weeks), the established order - whether it knows it or not - will be able to cope. What is more - at a deep level - class society even needs such jolts. This kind of 'revolution' permits class society to survive by compelling it to transform and adapt itself. This is the real danger today. Explosions which disrupt the imaginary world in which alienated societies tend to live - and bring them momentarily down to earth - help them eliminate outmoded methods of domination and evolve new and more flexible ones.

Action or thought? For revolutionary socialists the problem is not to make a synthesis of these two preoccupations of the revolutionary students. It is to destroy the social context in which such false alternatives find root.



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REVOLUTION LINE

For the first time in many years the government, while advising against it, did not prohibit the street demonstration on May 1st. In deciding to hold this demonstration despite the abstention of the CFDT and the FO, the CGT acted according to popular will (which expressed itself in an unusually large turn-out).

In the days that followed, attention turned from the workers' to the students' movement which had finally taken over the Sorbonne. The explosion there was instantaneous. It broke down all analyses, past and present, of the Communist Party which maintained that the great majority of students remained outside of a movement organized by some "groupuscules" of the Sociology Department at Nanterre.

It soon became apparent that the "groupuscules" -- partly regrouped in the "March 22 Movement" animated by Cohn-Bendit -- enjoyed an enormous influence.... The Communists' false analyses undoubtedly spring from two facts:

1. Having by all its former policies reduced the UEC (Communist Student Union) to a skeleton, the PCF no longer has any valuable contact with the mass of students.
2. Always wary of the Chinese threat, the PCF for a long time saw the work of Maoists in student agitation.... In fact, the mass of students are alienated by Maoist dogmatism and are much more receptive to the frankness and freshness of Cohn-Bendit.

The new prestige of "anarchy" as symbolized by the appearance of black flags was not, as *L'Humanité* said, the return of an archaic theory "which pushed the workers' movement 130 years backward". It was simply a global rejection by the mass of young people of institutions which belong (or seem to belong) to present society and as such are judged invalid. The solution to this grave problem, therefore, was not to insult the groupuscules and call Cohn-Bendit a "German Anarchist" as Georges Marchais did in his sad article in *L'Humanité*. It was to propose an ideal to the young people which, while coherent and structured, was nonetheless a new ideal.

Roche's unbelievable act of calling the police into the Sorbonne, the savage unleashing of the so-called "forces of order", for a moment brought the student and worker unions together. At that moment anything was possible, and the CGT, in giving the order for a general strike on May 13th along with the CFDT, UNEF and FEN, seemed to be resolutely joining the battle. If I may be permitted a personal avowal: On this day all the doubts which had secretly assailed me for a long while were swept away. I only wanted to see the positive side of things and that immense hopefulness of a struggling and fraternal people which, through a marvelous historical irony, gave to May 13th the colors of liberty.

The march of May 13th from République to Denfert-Rochereau was a political act of great importance. The turn-out was the largest seen since the liberation (about 800,000 demonstrators). There was a profound solidarity between workers, students and professors.

The next night, May 14th, the workers at Sud-Aviation at Nantes locked up their director, and the day after, Renault workers at Cléon occupied their factories. For fifteen days, that is, until May 30, when De Gaulle passed to the counter-offensive, France was to know a revolutionary period in which literally anything was possible.... During the first three days of this period the CGT didn't budge. Caught napping, it contented itself with taking passing note of the movement but didn't call for its extension and certainly didn't adopt any of the May 13th slogans such as "De Gaulle Resign"! The communique of the CGT bureau, Saturday the 18th at 8pm, is purely descriptive. It contains no call to action: "The strike spreads. The strikers' occupation of factories, of all places of work, becomes organized. The workers democratically express themselves on the questions of demands and the strike. They elect their strike committees, etc.". The same day, M. Hamelet of *Figaro* can already begin to celebrate the merits of Georges Séguy: "To the diatribes of yesteryear, M. Séguy, much to his credit, now substitutes the language of a P.D.G.*"...

BETRAYED by André Barjonet

As for Waldeck Rochet, General Secretary of the Communist Party, he "reaffirms his absolute solidarity with the workers who fight for their demands" and proclaims that "it is time to finish with this power and advance towards an authentic democracy", but also stipulates that it is necessary to arrive at an "accord between the parties of the left and the union organizations, to find a program which will function as a contract of the majority". (*L'Humanité-Dimanche*, May 19, 1968.)

Monday, May 20, All of France woke up paralyzed by the largest strike in its history. It was at this precise moment that Georges Séguy chose to proclaim the strictly bread-and-butter character of the strike before the workers at Régie Renault.

This speech was like a cold shower for me and (unconsciously) I began to realize that the moment had been lost, that the instant when anything was possible was already past.... But I forced myself to chase away this impression: the movement had not ceased to grow and it was unthinkable that the CGT.... would thus betray the confidence of an entire people.

After seeing Séguy several times I finally realized with certitude that the CGT.... not only had not for a moment thought of throwing its forces into the battle, but that it didn't envisage the least action to overthrow the Gaullist regime, to put an end to this "power of monopolies" which since 1958 it had never ceased to denounce.

On May 22 at 9pm, the bureau of the CGT published a communiqué of rare insolence opposing the students, UNEF and SNESup. It condemned the "unbelievable pretension" of UNEF in discussing "the conduct of the workers' struggles and their objectives" and denounced the "provocative character" of the demonstration planned by UNEF.

The catastrophic effect of such a communique (which was published by *L'Humanité* the next day in very small print) was such that from May 23 at 7am, Georges Séguy executed a painful about-face, affirming "no, the CGT has not broken with the students",...

Having by that time understood that the national leaders of the CGT not only did not want a revolution conforming to the first article of their statutes which calls for an end to the system of management and wage-earners, but also had no intention of overthrowing the Gaullist regime, I prepared to resign from the position of Secretary of the Confederal Center for Economic and Social Studies which I had held since 1946.

I probably would have delayed this decision if, on the night of the 23rd, there had not been a new CGT communiqué calling for demonstrations for immediate negotiations without the precondition of Pompidou's dismissal.

In publicly announcing my departure from the central union to which I had given the best of myself for more than twenty years, I made clear that I was "the last to underestimate.. the material and moral advantages that the working class could wrest from their struggle for demands".

But I added that at the moment when an entire people was struggling "it was possible to go much further, to advance towards socialism and, at the very least, to throw down the Gaullist regime. In failing to respond to the profound aspirations of the workers and students, which they weren't aware of or didn't care to understand, the large union and political structures are using the working class and the left to their own advantage, carrying a heavy historical responsibility to which it is no longer possible to associate myself"....

Late in the night of May 26-27, the union organizations and CNPF under Pompidou's crosser signed a "protocol of agreement" which accorded numerous salary advantages to the working class. In coming to defend this protocol of agreement before the striking workers at Renault the morning of the 27th, Georges Séguy -- at first greeted with enthusiasm -- soon made himself despised. Once again Renault provided the example. Everywhere,

at Berliet as well as Citroën, the strikers unanimously rejected the agreements.

Faced with this will to fight which it had not anticipated, the CGT "hardened" its position. Contrary to all semblance of reality, Georges Séguy repeated everywhere that "nothing has been signed"**. "Hardening" its position, in company with the Communist Party, the CGT did not modify it one iota.

The day after May 27th, as with the days preceeding it, nothing, absolutely nothing was planned to restrain De Gaulle and his government.

And yet, the night of the 27th a large demonstration, organized by UNEF and supported by PSU, drew....about 60,000 students and workers whose enthusiasm and sang-froid revealed all that still would have been possible if the PCF and the CGT had acted in the same direction.

Profiting from this criminal weakness, on Thursday, May 30, De Gaulle passed brutally to the counter-offensive. Although this counter-offensive -- very easy to foresee -- had been carefully prepared, (contacts with the Army chiefs and all the former leaders of Gaullist "networks" of the Resistance and May 1958), it was doubtlessly still possible to stop it. The parties of the left and the union organizations always possessed an essential trump-card: the unshaken resolution of ten million striking workers.

But at 6pm the communiqué of the political bureau of the PCF stated that "the first condition for regulating (sic) the immense conflict provoked by the unfortunate policies of a power in the service of trusts is to accede to the legitimate demands of the workers. That is the demand of the union organizations and the French Communist Party". In stating, finally, that it would go to electoral opinion "to expose its program of social progress and peace and its policy of unity between all democratic forces", the PCF officially proclaimed its intention of leaving the regime intact.

From this moment, the PCF began a campaign of ideological explanations -- if one can call them that -- to denounce, in caricaturing their thought, all those who believed in the Revolution, or at least in the changing of the regime. In a speech on May 31, Waldeck Rochet went beyond the limits of bad faith in condemning those who proclaimed themselves "ultra-revolutionary" and wanted "to lead astray the popular movement by throwing it into adventure". During this whole period, nobody to my knowledge proclaimed himself "ultra-revolutionary"! We didn't ask for that much! As for making sure that uncontrolled groupuscules, leftists and anarchists would not lead astray the movement by throwing it into "adventure", there was one way that would have been very simple: for the great working-class Party, the great, powerful Party, structured and calm, the French Communist Party, to call it by its name, to itself assume leadership of the movement. Apparently Waldeck Rochet thought of everything but that. In a style inspired by Joseph Prud'homme and Déroulède, Waldeck Rochet, after having condemned the "tarnished black flag of anarchy", enriched Marxist terminology with a new concept: that of a "revolutionary party in the good sense of the word". Let us pass on.....

Not at all surprising after such declarations that in the June 4th Figaro the anti-Marxist and anti-Communist sociologist, Raymond Aron, could render moving homage to the Communist Party: "At no moment did the Communist Party or the CGT push towards disturbance, at no moment did they want to topple the Gaullist power whose international policies fulfill their desires and which permits their progressive investment in French society. Obviously they would have taken charge of the state if it had been left open to them. However they had as their constant objective, not "the making of the Revolution" but the prevention of an outflanking on their left engineered by students, Maoists and young workers. The Governments errors are partly due to overconfidence in the support of the Communist Party. In the last analysis, however, the Party did not betray this confidence. In the hour which followed the President's speech, it deactivated the bomb and consented to elections which it had practically no hope of winning". I don't know how to say it better!.....

** The CGT had taken the precaution to say in advance that work would only be resumed with the consent of the workers themselves. But Seguy's speech at Renault on the 27th proves that he was convinced that the workers would welcome as a great victory the results which he had brought to them.

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RANDOM HOUSE 

a beginning

Editorial article dated June 6, 1968, from *Les Temps Modernes*, the French monthly whose editors include Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Andre Gorz, and others.

We now know that socialist revolution is not impossible

in at least one country of Western Europe and perhaps in two or three. We have a better idea of what a revolutionary process might be like and of what conditions -- which weren't fulfilled by the May insurrection -- are necessary for its success.

1. The process -- going from protest to repression to a defensive reaction to repression -- which led to the barricades of May 10 and then to the general strike has a certain resemblance to the Castro type insurrection.

a) The vanguard is not an established political organization guiding and organizing the masses in motion; it is an active minority which manifests its total rejection of existing society through striking actions in order to produce a psychological shock, to reveal the rottenness and weakness of the existing order, and to call -- through "exemplary actions," rather than through slogans, analyses or programs -- for the general insurrection.

The barricades of May 10 -- although they came about that day through an unforeseeable set of circumstances -- have shown the effectiveness of shock-actions accompanied by machine-gun-blasts of revolutionary and insurrectionary appeals, on the masses of workers, who were known to be dissatisfied but whom everybody from Duverger (Secretary General of French CP) to Waldack-Rochet (their "I.F.Stone") claimed were dissatisfied about purely bread and butter issues, consumer demands.

b) Contrary to the thesis which some of us defended in the past, on the necessity of stages -- or intermediate goals -- in order to make the need for revolution grow out of a series of struggles initially limited in their aims, it was the immediate revolutionary and openly subversive character of the student actions which provoked the mobilization of the working class.



The challenge to the better armed and organized police forces, the occupation of the University and the Odeon Theater, the establishment of a counter-university and a student power were ideas immediately embodied in exemplary actions, and these actions had greater power to convince and mobilize than traditional methods of agitation and propaganda. Not only did they show the practical possibility of overthrowing the established order at the level of one of its major institutions, they were its positive negation .

Although on May 13 the slogans of the CGT, CP, and Left Federation were still merely "raise our wages," "give us a 40 hour week," "a popular government," -- slogans which, in the tradition of "Pompidou nos sous" (Pompidou, give us our dough), were appeals to the "king's mercy" and demands for immediate and limited concessions from above -- on May 15, after the occupation of the University and the Odeon, the occupation of the factories echoed the student insurrection: the working class spontaneously took power, in its own way, at the point of production. Its action had no other content than itself, that is, the taking of power, the negation of the social and production relations of capitalism.

2. As opposed to the student insurrection which, with the support of a part of the teaching staff, could take power in the University and run it contrary to the logic of the surrounding society and its State without the latter being mortally hurt in the visible future, the workers' rising could not do the same thing in the centers of production, with the support of a part of the technical staff, unless this workers' power attacked the roots of private property and undertook the conquest of state power. This could not be accomplished by the type of spontaneous activity which had conquered

the University; it presupposed a political strategy, that is the existence of a revolutionary organization.

a) Such an organization, if it had existed and if it had had influence over the local strike committees and action committees, could have set up centers of worker and popular power everywhere before the State was ready to react; it could have smashed the basis of the capitalist state before hav-



ing to take on and win the final combat; it could have coordinated the takeover, from below, of whole sections of the system of production, distribution and administration, and stimulated, wherever the workers were prepared to try it, the movement from occupying stopped factories to the re-opening and reorganization of the occupied companies based on workers' control. These "self-management strikes," tried out in France and Italy in the early 1950's, would have signified the same sort of political-ideological break as the setting up of counter-universities.

Although it was not possible everywhere, this type of transformation of the strikes was practicable in the technically advanced industries as well as in some of the big public services (post office, transport, municipal administration, radio-T.V.). The transit strike, especially, could have taken the form of the self-organization of free public transport by the striking workers, thus prefiguring a new type of non-commercial service. "Self-management strikes" in the petroleum, chemical, electrical, etc. spheres would have prefigured their necessary socialization. The organization of bringing foodstuffs and supplies to the cities through the strike committees working with peasant cooperatives and local committees would have prefigured the elimination of commercial speculation and the socialization of distribution. This social management of a section of the economy, which was a precondition for continuing the strike indefinitely, would also have been its result.

The sit-in strike could have been accompanied everywhere by the reorganization of work and of the shops, by a setting of new production rates and rhythms, by an abolition of hierarchical relations, by a transformation of the relation between manual and non-manual workers, by a purging of incompetent and despotic foremen and the immediate promotion of new shop and factory managers, with a call for assistance to students, teachers, and researchers with skills useful for making the experiment succeed.

The occupation and the beginning of the self-management of these installations, conceived as a form of workers' liberation and self-education as well as a partial taking of power by the working class, would have allowed many things at once: satisfying certain worker demands, through self-determination from below, without waiting for the consent of the management and the State: keeping the whole country on strike without depriving it of any vital products; rejecting all negotiations with the bourgeois state and the boss class and waiting for their abdication while using the time profitably for the self-organization of the proletariat and its allies, for the setting up at every level of centers of direct democracy and popular power, and for the working out, at every level and in every domain, of the methods and goals of a post-capitalist society.

b) The enumeration of these possibilities which were present after the 15th of May allows us to measure the ideological, political, and organizational unpreparedness of the parties and trade-unions which proclaim themselves to be the guides of the working class. None of them tried to give the general and potentially revolutionary strike anti-capitalist perspectives or a consciousness of its possibilities and its deeper significance. The whole job of radical reflection, elaboration, and transformation undertaken by students, teachers, artists, scientists, technicians, architects, doctors, writers, and journalists, was done outside of, even in spite of, the "party of the working class" which for ten full days, tried its best to give limited and reformist goals to the student insurrection (cf. Humanite's presentation of "exam reform" worked out by Communist teachers) and to press on the workers occupying the factories traditional demands which were uniformly of a "bread and but-

ter" variety and subject to negotiation at the summit with the existing government; it was as if the deepest concern of the Party and the CGT was to contain the movement, prevent a revolution, avoid the fall from power of the bourgeois State, and to put off all transformation to a later date when it would be decided, limited, proclaimed and administered from above, dispassionately, by a reinforced state power once again master of the country. The leadership of the CPF and the CGT -- the latter denouncing every initiative coming from outside its own ranks with a pseudo-workerish fury far beyond even its own usual primitivism -- were revealed as the principle forces of anti-revolutionary order in French society. By trying to line up with the masses and follow them instead of developing new initiatives, bringing new perspectives and new means for expression and experimentation to their struggle, these organizations were constantly outrun and dragged along by the actions invented by the rank and file which, in rejecting the settlement of May 27th, brought into sharp focus the enormous gap between a movement which was openly revolutionary in its broadness, its methods, its immediate aims (a base salary of 1,000 francs, the 40 hour week, and workers' power in the factories are, in France, demands which are incompatible with the continuation of the capitalist system) and the lousy 10% wage hikes garnished with vague promises with which the CGT thought it could calm down the working class.

3. The greatest concern of the leadership of the workers' movement throughout the sharpest period of the crisis was to reassure not only the social democrats and the centrists but the boss class itself. As early as May 23 the CGT tried to make contact with the CNPF (the French NAM) in order to personally reassure it concerning the intentions of the Communist leaders and to give it concrete tokens of their desire -- already publicly proclaimed -- to negotiate with management on a basis of normal demands.

The Communist leadership's overt reason for this was that it was important not to compromise, through "rash acts" or even through exploiting a revolutionary situation, the political and parliamentary alliance which the CPF and the Left Federation had begun; that it was necessary to avoid giving the Federation a pretext

for doubting the respectability of the CPF, or its sense of legality and order, its rejection of revolutionary methods and of revolution itself, its loyalty as a future partner in a reformist government. Even more: it was necessary that the Communists should not appear as the main political force of the growing movement nor assume its leadership, its glory, and -- tomorrow -- its electoral strength; for



if they appeared as or become the principle force on the Left, their future reformist partners might turn away in horror from a one-sided alliance and might force back into its isolation a CPF which had again become threatening because of having too much power.

Thus, in order to reassure its partners in a future bourgeois government, the CPF in many ways trailed far behind them and, up until the 26th of May (the date when Roger Garaudy, in the name of the Politburo, made a useless attempt to change the line) carried on a campaign of insult and denunciation of genuinely Stalinist brutality and filth against all other vanguards, whether intellectual or not. On many occasions the CPF showed it knew how to use Stalinist terror in the service of a conservative line and, in order to defend it, to prevent the exercise of freedom of assembly, of speech, and of the press, to place students in the hands of the cops (in Lyon), to approve the decisions (which was judged ill-advised even by some Gualists) of France's chief cop to expell Cohn-Bendit from the territory.

Thus, in order to hold on to its future chances in reformist politics, the CPF suppressed the present chances for a socialist revolution. It suppressed them by such methods and in such a manner that neither its permanent enemies nor its potential allies will be reassured.

Thus, acting on a plan already two years old which aimed at getting the CPF into the parliamentary game, the death by natural

causes of the Vth Republic, an orderly transition to the VIth and a place for the Communists in a government of limited and progressive reforms, the CPF refused to exploit the May crisis. It refused to believe in the possibility of that crisis (taking its distance in relation to the student insurrection); then in the reality of that crisis (pushing for negotiations with a moribund regime);



finally in its potential, the revolutionary seizure of power by the working class. The working class, inspired by the victory of the students against the government and, in many places, by their direct propaganda, brought the revolution on a silver platter to the table of the socialist forces. But since this event didn't agree with their pre-established plan, they rejected the platter in order to offer the working class a nominal 10% wage hike and the perspective of a doubtful election and some reforms which put socialism off until the extinction of the moon.

4. The type of party and the type of actions capable of bringing a revolutionary crisis to its conclusion were defined as it were "in absentia" during the recent events.

a) The revolutionary party of the new type cannot merely be a structured, centralized organization designed for taking over the state apparatus through legal means. Such a conquest of power would either be impossible or, if it became possible through some surprise, would always involve political risks (the loss of allies necessary for the normal exercise of a parliamentary power) and military risks (civil war blackmail) which the tradi-

tional type of party would refuse to run by its very nature and purpose.

b) The taking of power can only result from revolutionary processes developing from the periphery toward the center. The State cannot be conquered through the confiscation, peaceful or otherwise, of its power apparatus so long as it has been kept intact. Its conquest will result from its own crumbling and paralysis following the rise of self-organized popular forces in the factories, administrations, public services, towns, cities, and regions. The taking of power in the decision-making centers; and in the centers of production, physically within the grasp of the organized workers, emptying the bourgeois state of its substance, thereby breaking its resistance. The revolution--as in 1917 -- will be based in the beginning on the initiative of the masses, on the exercise of "dual-power" by the action committees (or soviets) of the strikers, workers and localities.

c) Consequently, the activity of the new type of revolutionary party will be based not on disciplined militants acting under the orders of a central apparatus in their daily activity, but on local activists who will judge and take initiative independently in relation to local conditions, who can guide and stimulate the discussions of free assemblies, the self-organization and self-determination of organized citizens, and their taking over and control of their own collective conditions of existence.

The central party apparatus does not, for all of this, become superfluous, but its role is reduced to: coordinating the activities of local activists through an information and communications network; working out general perspectives and specific proposals in every institutional area, especially in relation to socialist economic planning; aid in the formation of teams able to establish and run the central institutions of the revolutionary society.

5. It was indisputable, up until now, that nothing was possible without the Communist Party of France and the CGT; it is now indisputable that nothing is possible with them as they are now. Unfortunately, the first statement remains true even when the second is obvious. It is thus necessary that the CPF and the CGT change,

but they are certainly not likely to do it by themselves. This could happen only under the revolutionary pressure of the rank and file and of events. But is it not true that the defeatist backward movement now being organized by the trade-union leadership (who try to hide it) will exclude this possibility, perhaps for a long time?

Nonetheless the elections might result, if Gaullism is defeated, in a reopening of the offensive. It would certainly be absurd not to care and to dismiss the two adversaries as "objectively" the same thing -- using the same type of argument as the Communists used to use against others now that they deserve to have it used against themselves. It's not that one should have any illusions about the virtues of a government which might come out of elections won by the "Left," but if the present majority were brought back it might seem to justify the policy of the CP and reinforce its wish -- or rather its dream, its refusal, almost, -- to decide on the question of revolution only from above. On the contrary, if a Leftist majority got into Parliament, DeGaulle would be obliged either to fight it openly and illegally or to retire; this would create a situation whose outcome is unforeseeable today and would give back to the actions of vanguards and then to the masses the opportunities which the fossilized leadership has just lost for them.

The French capitalist system has suffered a shock which will sharpen its contradictions for a long while to come, bring on a series of crises and intensify the class struggle. The wage hikes the working classes have just won are of such importance that the system can neither absorb them into its present structures nor establish a new equilibrium at a higher level. The boss class will try to take back by every possible means the better part of what it has just been forced to concede. The regime's economic policy has become non-viable. No government, "popular" or otherwise, will be in a position over the coming year to make French capitalism (whose rigidity and narrow margins for concessions are notorious) function normally in terms of its inner logic.

The French working classes will thus be obliged more and more consciously to



question the system which has just been shaken by their limited victories and within whose framework these gains cannot be safeguarded or, even more obviously, enlarged. Thousands of new, young militants who are more radical than their elders have just sprung forth and found their vocation; hundreds of thousands of workers have recently become politicised and have discovered a field of possibilities heretofore unimagined. They will continue the struggle and take it up again at the next occasion, if necessary by pushing their leaders out of the way. The unsuccessful insurrection of May was just a beginning.

Translated by Dick Greenman.

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STUDENTS AND WRITERS ACTION COMMITTEE TO FOREIGN STUDENT AND WRITER FRIENDS



We don't know when and how the next confrontation between the Gaullist power and the revolutionary forces will take place. But we know that there will be a confrontation and we are preparing for it. Power is also readying itself. Its repressive police machine is already menacing the essential democratic liberties. Unauthorized searches multiply, as well as arbitrary arrests, in the street and in private homes. The security of foreign residents is no longer guaranteed. The xenophobic power menaces them, chases them, expels them.

Nevertheless, one of the regime's strong points is the prestige which it generally continues to have in foreign countries. We needn't examine the reasons for which governments, be they socialist, bourgeois-democratic or fascist, favor De Gaulle. At best it is a question of diplomatic strategy which the people who are most free must contest in the name of internationalism. In this regard, the role of revolutionary artists and intellectuals from all countries could be decisive. For us, here, it is a question of creating an absolute cultural void on the official level. We have already refused all collaboration with French radio and television (government owned), and forbidden them to use any of our works. This itself is not enough, and we are establishing a boycott of all institutions and organs which, from near or far, are answerable to the cultural services of the police state.

Playing on the prestige of French culture, the Gaullist dictatorship tries to strengthen its anti-popular policy of nationalist "grandeur" in foreign countries, precisely under the cover of cultural relations and events. We ask you to organize yourselves in your respective countries to put an end to this French policy of "radiation" which is directed by Malraux, De Gaulle's "minister of state."

We suggest as a beginning that you write an open collective letter to the French cultural attache's stating that you refuse cooperation with any event organized by them or by any official organ like "Alliance Francaise." The spectacular sabotage of these events (exhibitions, conferences, debates, prizes) that comes from intellectuals, artists and students would be the best help we could get.

Nothing prevents us from acting on an economic level to topple the cultural establishment and contribute to the ruin of the system --- for example, by organizing campaigns against tourism in France.

Finally, we ask that you use your knowledge of your own territory to devise modes of action and choose the moment which seems best to you to come to our aid. Also we ask that you continue your own struggle against your institutions, your oppressors, your own bourgeoisie.



CRS=SS

AS WE WATCHED the daily functioning of the "maintenance of order," be it in the Latin Quarter, in Flins, or elsewhere, the first reaction was that which we had always had, to denounce, to protest, to be indignant...

And finally, what purpose does it all serve? And here are some answers:

1. The Gaullist regime is a police state. It differs from a fascist state in that at its height it is grandeur and liberalism, a great spectacle. It resembles the fascist state, at its base and in its subtlety, in its sordid and silencing methods which are systematically debasing. Everything rests in the right usage of hypocrisy. It makes sense that the caricatures of DeGualle resemble more and more the last attempts of an old madame to patch herself up.



2. During the periods of "calme", the daily repression swoops down, without reprieve, on those who have no choice but to keep quiet. On October 17, dozens of Algerian militants who were demonstrating peaceably, were thrown into the Seine, dead or alive, in the midst of general indifference. (That day, when they were beating people in the street, the windows of Humanité were modestly closed.) What has happened daily for ten years at Orly upon the arrival of Algerian workers and continues today at the most luxurious airport in the world, which concerns no one, any more than the unbelievable harassment which accompanies the simple turning over of work permits to foreign workers in the Paris area, without even considering the extortions of the mute cops given the great task of decontaminating the slums.

3. The other side of this "spectacular", of the grandeur and civilization of this "elegant wreck" is thus the obscure and continual repression of those who aren't even heard from: the slaves of our society. For this task the state has slowly and surely established a race of less-than-men whose appearance in broad day light has surprised some of the "honest" French bourgeoisie and whose existence most of the other bourgeoisie continue to deny: "CRS, the brave ones!" . . . this race of wellfed watchdogs has something in common with the SS of the concentration camps: a constant wish to degrade. Perhaps the SS openly claim national socialism as their "ideal", while ours have for their ideal the civilization of the race-track: both act as if traumatized by their own imbecility, in a last attempt to put everything on their own level.

4. Why suddenly become indignant about a fact that has existed for a long time? that everybody admits, that has been part of the daily life of so many good Frenchmen? (PARIS-MATCH publishes more than a million copies with a photo of cops beating

on people lying inert --like the most natural thing in the world.)

5. At this stage indignation is hypocritical or ridiculous. The response of the students was the best and the only valid one: they defended themselves, and they have for the first time inflicted on the Gaullist police a serious defeat. It is an extraordinary lesson of courage and dignity that the youth give us with bare hands, confronting mercenaries armed with all the most modern weapons -- a recent trade union communique said they are complaining of not yet having sufficient means of defense! The minister of the interior and Humanite had found, the same day, by a curious coincidence, the same qualifier for our "irresponsible" youth (this same irresponsibility that won other young people so many decorations and honors for the liberation of Paris): "hoodlums". It is an unforgettable spectacle to have, at one meter from a barricade, assisted in the departure of the last defenders and the arrival of the first members of the forces of order: cops giving animal cries: it's difficult to imagine how horrible a fearful cop is. As a militant said, with dignity, but naiveté, a few seconds before: "Watch out, these cops are uncontrollable!"

6. Everything has re-entered the order. No political party -- the Communist Party of France no more than any other "parties of the establishment" -- claims that the police should be purged of its "uncontrollable" elements. And this is normal, because it is a game no one can mistake. The police are an integral part of the capitalist state. And it has been shown to us that nobody wants to come forward again. There is nothing more to be done. Yesterday they beat up the young people at Flins, saying they were provoked by the Katangais (armed militants, ex-mercenaries), they threw out the foreigners. Today they continue to arrest young people in the street and to detain them for two days, "a legally authorized period." Tomorrow it will continue. Until the youth makes, until we make this revolution about which they sneer: " They don't even know what they want." As if to surpress the police state, the police mechanisms, the police hate weren't already a goal in itself. As if it were possible to do something without beginning something.

Francois Maspero



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I answered this ad in "Figaro". I am called an urban sociologist. If I worked eight hours a day and five days a week I would earn 3000 francs a month. I earn more. I work ten hours a day and more than five days a week. Insanity. I spent five years studying. First, two years of preparation for the Normal Supérieure. Then a degree in philo. I spent a year preparing for the aggregation exam. I gave it up to preserve what little sanity I had left.

Finally I was hired by an architect who headed an office of urban studies. As a sociologist. For a year I got to the office on time every morning. I studied there. Nobody gave me anything to do. So I read all the periodicals that fell into my hands. I ended up being baptized a documentalist. A profession for which philosophy studies prepares one excellently.

After the architect, I worked for an engineer. There I began to practice what is called sociology -- human science. Or investigations. I made up the questionnaires myself and I went to get them filled out. House by house. The profession of sociology in modern France consists in walking from door to door. Visits, in the style of travelling salesmen or parish priests. Or else, of course, with a degree in sociology, you can always put in your candidacy for the post of chief of personnel in a small business. You would have less work there and fewer social cases to regulate. Console an employee who hasn't gotten his raise. Advise another about this marital problems and oversee the decoration of the Christmas tree. There are two hundred urban sociologists in France. Not one less. When the student revolutionaries say that they don't want to become urban sociologists because territorial management is the worst of repressions, they are right. But 99% of them have no chance of arriving at these high stations in the hierarchical system of the guardians of order.

I forgot a possible opening. Industrial sociology. For example: studying the real communicative value of some advertising which costs Prouvost 1600 francs a month in order to analyze the wording of a commercial for stockings. If that interests you. Sociology is never used for serious purposes. Right now I'm carrying out some investigations for an industrial group that wants to create some cultural organizations for its employees. Work like this is obviously a participation in repression. Lock culture into a hall, etc., etc. But there are worse things. The sociological investigation in this case consists in breaking up the cultural activities of a working-class town. It's necessary to note those which exist and those which don't. Already my employers are saying that those which don't exist correspond to needs. Already they're planning performances of the lyric opera. They impose the cultural activities for which the bourgeoisie feels nostalgia. A sociologist is not even a cop. He's a pimp.

I don't say that my work interests me. I say that an urban sociologist can lead a struggle within the framework of his profession. On the condition that he uses weapons equal to those of his employers. For example, in choosing questions and answers which threaten the established order. Exactly as the representatives of order do. You know that soon they're going to move the Sorbonne to the Chevreuse valley. To decide what will be put in its place there is the semblance of an investigation of interested persons. I heard with my own ears a high authority and the well-known director of a survey institute agree to formulate a question in this way: "Would you like an administrative building in place of the Sorbonne?" The building in question was already decided upon. It will be an old age home for the riot police.

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