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DEVOTED TO
THE BATTLE
OF FRANCE
1968

CAW!
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

(continued on page 46...)

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 struggle, 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 so tied up, so 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
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

CDJA - Democratic Confederation of Young Agricultural Workers

JCML - Marxist-Leninist Youth Group

UEC - Union of Communist Students

SNESup - teachers' union

FER - Federation of Revolutionary Students; as JCR

JCR - Revolutionary Communist Youth; Trotskyist organization

UEC - Union of Communist Students

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

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 NYT Times
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 claricord, 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,
ot 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)

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 16 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.
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 blacklists, 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 marital 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 desire, or the excitement, caused by abstinence, over 'wedding night',
- it's making virile power culminate in deflowering;
- it's mentally paving 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 exciting adolescents with erotic films, removing the satisfaction, but renewing them

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 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 of a Leaflet for a Lecture on W. Reich in Nanterre

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 photograph 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 rioted over 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 stop 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 they didn't draw any lessons from this; 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 bourgeois. 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: Crozier's course on "organization" was a 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 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 about 600 young high school students. On March 22, about 5 in the afternoon, a small group led by Daniel Cohend-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 machinery... Here there was something very new, because in reality, we were occupying an auditorium, and had decided before the event decided the rest. There were between 600 and 700 students who began to discuss: 'What can we do?' Here we didn't say 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 literally gone.

After some very long discussions, the decision to occupy the Administration Building at Nanterre was taken. The subsequent discussions had carried the day: students didn't
leave until after they had decided on an action which they undertook immediately. Danu 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 anti-imperialist students. After the general assembly some students said: "That isn't true; there are numerous other departments where people practice 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 reason why the students who had been arrested were militants of the National Vietnam Committee. A militant of the National Vietnam Committee started to explain the reason 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 exposition was 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: "Yes, militants of the NVC were arrested because they're the greatest threat to the bourgeoisie..." and a whole political exposition was 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: "Yes, militants of the NVC were arrested because they're the greatest threat to the bourgeoisie..."

That's when the March 22 Movement was born. You belonged to the March 22 Movement if you were anti-imperialist. "What's going on?" someone 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 then 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 already?" The Nanterre people said, "Now that you're here, now that you're occupying, as you say, you have to discuss what you're going to do to maintain your occupation in a 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 nothing else matters any more." No reaction. Then someone else said, "What's got to be done is that all the signs which say, 'Political discussions are authorized' will 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. There were some who threatened that all the 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 commission meetings. 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. There were some who thought this was just another attempt 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 the 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, which caused panic strikes, especially since many of them were more or less fascists. They went looking for the dean, and told him: "If you don't assure our safety, 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 commissars, etc., were allowed to develop their actions in the University, the FNEF would react, would fight, and would therefore take the same step. The panicked dean decided to close the University on Thursday the 29th, 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 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 March 22 Movement) 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 provocateurs. 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 wrong time, 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. Everybody except from 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 the previous day, 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 invention 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 anti-imperialist days. It won't last."

No reaction. Someone said, "Well, it's up to the political troops to decide to hold political reunions in the Sorbonne, and nothing else matters anymore."

Then someone else said, "What's got to be done is that all the signs which say, 'Political discussions are authorized' will be replaced by signs which say, 'Political discussions are authorized.'"

There were 700 CRS (Compagnies Republiques de Securite, the riot police) around the University 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 someone 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
saying: "Students of Nanterre, you stay inside the university as a self-defense group and watch out for snipers, tear gas, rubber bullets, and all other kinds of materials." They planned to dig trenches and to put tree trunks over them so that the fascists couldn't hold 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 then throw these off the roofs with very resilient elastic."

"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 students who were still intoxicated; at 3 in the morning some of them went to the Bois de Boulogne (the Forest of Boulogne) to cut branches for slingshots, 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 back. That evening there was a totally chaotic meeting where the militants got into fights with members of the Vietnamese committee: "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 (defence 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 paramilitary 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) where the university was closed and that courses could no longer be held there. The Sorbonne got increasingly blocked up. Courses were interrupted. They always wanted to go 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, that was no sort of a new thing, a 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.

On Saturday, May 4, the students of Nanterre were at the Academic of Paris (Revolutionary Communist Youth) explaining that the Sorbonne was a no man's land, a novelty in a new place, a place where blood had been shed, to enter into the system. The March 22 Movement.
by the students as by the government: 'No, that can't happen at the Sorbonne!' They'd let the war 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 real demonstration, with people you don't know, 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, Danu 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 those who passed by the Disciplinary Council.' The comrades were told about the charges against the people arrested, but it became obvious that no issue 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 government 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 six 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 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 back up." 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 March 22, the people, the 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 Sainte prison as our objective. The idea of going to the Ministry of Justice, passing by the Assembly, but at the head of the demonstration, the way it was to do again on May 24 at the Place d'Italie. Everyone shouted, 'Out of the question, we'll stay here!' We were ready with self-critique, explaining how the union bureaucracy works, trying 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 the police against the French students! The police are left, 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 fight 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 had most 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. Danu and Co. insisted that the 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 Sainte 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 Sainte, but the fact that the UNEF put itself at the head of the issue changed everything and, as usual, channelled the demonstration toward the Sorbonne.

At Denfert-Rochereau, Danu 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 here!' We were ready with self-critique, explaining how the union bureaucracy works, trying 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 the police against the French students! The police are left, 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 fight 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 had most implied a struggle by the working class and not just by the students. This idea had been developed in discussions since Friday evening.

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At Denfert-Rochereau, Danu presented
barricade, and that meant demonstrators for the service of order to be the only ones be in it. Dany and two comrades placed participants who were afraid. Afraid that cops which always put forward its service of order." we decided that on May 10 there wouldn't be any service of order so that everyone would be able to defend themselves; that meant demonstrators 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 there would be no more cops; any service of order so that everyone would be in it. Dany and two comrades placed themselves at the corner of Boulevards Saint-Martin and Beaubourg Streets, two progressive processes 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 to the slogans. The students, whom the CGT directors considered leftists, adventurers, 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 Châtelet there wasn't a single one of the CGT posters. Until this demonstration, the students who were demonstra- 

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 had never before been to demonstrations. And these people didn't imagine they were doing illegal things; for example, they could have told us "Let's go, dirty little hoodlums, you're ruining our cars." They didn't say that at all; on the contrary, it 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 it was created in fact. The day of the general strike, Monday May 13, the Elysée appeared, and lots of people in front of it: "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. 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, and 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 of the factories, but these no longer had the same
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, negotiations. Very quickly, after four days, we started to talk about active strikes, about food and provocations 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.' The students, because you're students; but the army would intervene and shoot: 'Do you propose?' 'Some exchange among us,' they told us what happened is that this was seen clearly, •

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, disorder. 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, and we were scared. And then we left a few 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 (Unified 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 opened—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 repudiation of the unions and the Communist Party. But what happened is that this was seen clearly, and sometimes oppressors, 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 factory the same day, saying, 'It's with the students we've got a common language, while you...'. 'The factories, for example, said: 'You, the students, have no demands. Suddenly 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 the rank and file. But the CGT functionaries hadn't elaborated anything. Now that the problem of returning to work is being posed, the strike committees, wherever 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 still the same, that 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, 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 rectorate, 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 an oblique 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'Humanité when public opinion shifted, when the phraseology of l'Humanité 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 15, 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 of workers. Since the workers 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 the impression that they were taking a leftward shift; it was all very clear. But this wasn't taken up yet by l'Humanité. One has the impression 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 it 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 concretes and very important measures. At the Bon Marché, 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 is a huge thing, we can take 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.

"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*
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 bourgeois 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 channelling 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 banning 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
mimicking; it is not transmission through forms the power relations in a given case are transferable. It is this action which transforms 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 in the system. 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 hatched 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 concerning 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.

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-optation.

The transformation of comrades like Dany Cohn-Bendit and Alain Gelismar into leaders and spokesmen was interesting. The CGT (General Confederation of Labor) refused to let the students into the factories.

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 transfer them into places for political discussion.

An enormous number of striking workers came to the theater to discuss 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 looked 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 elements...
ary: 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 undermined the very 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 simple, though analytical process 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 1. 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 not 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 much it 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's very important 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, 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 more 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's exemplary. One can even 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 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 foreshown, and which couldn't be maintained. That's probably why the problem of organization comes up this way, 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; I'll probably work." It's time for something else.

Until now we grooped 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 a new, new re-labelling type of revolutionary process which developed until now, or if it remains adventurism. If Renault and Citroen hold on until the end, if they resist the 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 selfman-
agement of the factories. That is not pos-
sible; 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 re-
main, 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 ob-
ject for negotiation. That's the way the
workers lived it: "We won't leave the fac-
tories until we get . . ." The students did
more than occupy; inside they started to
install forms of self-management.

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 over-
throw it completely. If one had shown that,
publicized it, maybe so me 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 indus-
tries, and so on. They were obliged to do
that because of the position they were in.
They didn't have to wait for the Govern-
ment 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, especi-
ally 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 work-
ers 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 relation-
ship. They exploded it!

In there any way that we, in the pre-
sent situation, could transform a list of
demands into the creative acts of a sec-
ond power? Can we, students or revolu-
tionary militants, adopt the list of de-
mands of a B.H.V. and thus move toward
their realization in today's society—an
autonomous power whose demands are ap-
plied exclusively by those who work in
the B.H.V.

The Paris Commune was not a revo-
 lutionary power from the start. It became
a revolutionary power when pushed by e-
 vents. Denunciation of the police system
inside the B.H.V. by the employees them-
selves is already a first step.

We can also refer to the lists of com-
plaints in the French bourgeois Revo-
lution of 1789. That politicized the mas-
ses. Everyone came with a list of de-
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MOVEMENT LITERATURE! FROM "REP" -

MANAGEMENT AND SELF-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, it was 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 Flins 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 C.G.T. unions had contributed money so that the Flins workers could hold on. Yesterday, in the discussion which took place in the park at the Château des Maroux, 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 C.G.T.?"

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; we need 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 line, in the fights with the cops,' and so on.

The comrades 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
role of the CGT as an obstacle to the strike much better than verbal denunciations. Self-management and self-defense: provisionally 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 everything 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 of whether or not these initiatives will take hold, and what can follow them. In the case where it 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 didn't want 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 canteens; 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 whole of this creative action of it 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 others, who would 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, and delegates 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-management 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 the factory makes no sense unless you talk of the entire capitalist system."

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 even the smallest piece of the cake. During this period the union officials' main function was to be bureaucrats who wiped out all possible activity by the workers, continued page 36...
to find refuge elsewhere. The police chief asked for his papers and told him to leave.

10:00 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.

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.”

EVENING, 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 so years, 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 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 conceived. This dichotomy between the autonomous organiza-
tion has hardly succeeded. As Marx would understand that the Soviets were the embryo of a class, this conception 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, 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 is 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 problem, 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 was a specific current which consists of the Nantes Workers' Force held by anarchists and by some Trotskyists of the Lombard 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 dealing 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 Mayor in 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-united or organized people, and there are not any elections. Our comrades considered 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 Fins: a parallel structure is in the process of being created:

--- on the one hand there's the strike committee and the UCM (Union of Marxist-Leninist Communist Youth), due

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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 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. An 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 harrassing 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 traditional schema, spontaneity consists merely of trade-union demands, etc.; a step which breaks with this spontaneity; and who compete with the other powers.

Thus we see a complete reversal of the Leninist problem. For us the cleavage exists, for example, between 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 sort 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 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.

Generally speaking I kept 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 most important. Any 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, more beautiful, more profitable for you. Why do we study so that they profit from it?

Our struggle is to fight 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 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 46 hours.

In the USA, we have 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' demonstrations. You have the same demands, you get out of control.

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 real in the real sense of the word; they are 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, the end of forced labor--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, between the UNIVERSIFICATION 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.
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 proletarian or the revolutionary forces, but to interpret spontaneity. This is a fundamental distinction.

What does “spontaneity” 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 collectively 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-
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 General Assembly at the Maison des Lettres. It seemed to me that 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 drier up heritage, one which lacks the sense of Leninism. In other words, the problem of the power of the bourgeoise 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; it seemed like an impoverished vision of the taking of Petersburg in 1917, a vision which could be characterized as "putchism 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 centers of power (uncontrolled regions, disorganized state services, 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 centers of power (uncontrolled regions, disorganized state services, 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 infrastructures, the destruction of information circuits, the destruction of the bourgeois state machine, and the destruction of the possibility of a gag to a traditional commando action.)
placed. In fact this is carried out with external elements, and it doesn't seem at all artificial (so to speak) to the workers to get help from people from outside. It's even something quite normal to call on elements which are not part of the factory in order to reoccupy the factory.

It's the guys in the strike picket who asked us to come help them. Their firmness, their resolution, and their determination were reinforced by the fact that we were there. It's the fact of our mutual presence that reinforced the conviction of the men in the strike picket that could also persuade the others. But it's not we who went in the cars; they went. Perhaps they would not have done this with the same determination if people from outside had not been there to reinforce them.

We are a 'sounding board.' In other words when someone comes to ask us what to do, if we answered directly we'd mess him up. We succeed when we send men back to do specifically what they have to do, with more determination, but not exactly following the students' plan.

Another example: yesterday, at a meeting near Flins, some guys from the Fédération des Etudiants Révolutionnaires (Federation of Revolutionary Students) came (after the fight, obviously) to make propaganda for their objectives, which were 1 million workers in front of the Elysée, and a general strike. If in fact there had been a general strike at that time, it would have been valuable as defense of the workers fighting in Flins. But for them that wasn't the problem at all. The guy from the F.E.R. gave a speech: he explained the general strike, he said there should be a demonstration of all the workers, all the corporations, all the factories, in front of the Elysée, and for this there was only one thing to do immediately, namely to hold a procession in front of the unions and to convince the responsibles to fulfill the engagements they'd undertaken the day before, namely to speak to the top echelons of the CGT and the CFDT. They made their appeal; we obviously let them speak; but out of the 200 or 300 workers who were there, there were at most three people who got into the cars with them.

They were also students like ourselves, but the problem is not that workers talk to any students at all. The way we get involved is by changing the question "what should we do, as students" to the question, "what are you going to do, and to what extent can we participate in the process?"

Consequently, it is through the development of consciousness within an experience that the problems of organizing the solidarity of the struggles are posed. One of our fundamental oppositions to those who pose the problem of leadership and coordination of struggles in a Leninist manner is their way of reestablishing the relations of authority and hierarchy which they want or don't want. They substitute themselves for the workers, saying: "We, in your place, are going to solve the problems of coordinating the struggles." As long as we remain there, we'll not advance in the revolutionary process. They pose the problem of power in terms of institutions, and of institutions which can only be bourgeois, namely a bourgeois organizational system. In other words, for them the problem of workers' power, of socialist power, consists in the conquest of the State apparatus.
VICTORY WITHIN THE VICTORY
continued from page 1

consequently, if the maintainance of order is a necessary evil, this evil is a good which every mothers' son ought to accept like a gift from Heaven: the invented Grace of lay society, the Gift of the Holy Spirit, the rational invention which they will invent instruments, an original rationality, real democracy, happiness, black, yellow and red races, working force etc.,

in short all these zones disqualified by their very names which are preciscely the product of the counter-terror the bourgeoisie inflicted 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 flows in places 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 problems: 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 censure 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 revolutionary violence: the capitalist bourgeoisie, reason and actual power. Can industrial society become the truth that will no longer be the truth. This brand new paroxistic 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 digging up the paving-stones in the streets to know that Reason is less exigeant than its doctors of science teach, since it is reduced to a mere nut, the derisive symbol of the bourgeoisie's breathless before the spectacles of the age-old base of its existence trembling under the feet of the historical progress of its problems: 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 censure of its laws.

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 preatorian 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 gives him his 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 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 passions and not in relation to the purity of the sacrifcio.

We live in the epoch of collective "madness." Castro taking an Island with 8 men, Mao closing the universities for a year, thus winning over the mass of anti-bureaucratija forces (whether he wanted to on not) which will assure the performance 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 not 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.
Humanity won't be happy until the last bureaucrat is hung with the guts of the last capitalist.
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

The French events have a significance that exceeds 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: 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.
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 surprising and sometimes paradoxical consequences have settled. What can be said from now is that, if honestly carried out, such an analysis will complicate the work of '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 cobles, 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, until a passing building worker showed them how, perhaps the first worker actively to support the student revolt. Once broken, the road surface provided cobles, 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. Fouchez (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)'; 'On essaye de lire les murs 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: 'Liberez nos camarades'; 'Fouchet, Grimaud, démission'; 'A bas l'Etat policie'; 'Greve Generale Lundi'; 'Travailleurs, Etudiants, solidaires'; 'Vive les Conseils Ouvriers'; 'Vive la societe de consommation'; 'Debout les damnés de Nanterre'. The slogan 'Baisses-toi et broute' (Bend your head and chew the cud) was enviously aimed at those whose minds are still full of traditional preoccupations.

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par son absence radicale du 'criticism' de la modernisation. Celui-ci, par définition, est une critique qui se limite à l'adaptation du système existant, et qui est donc incapable de provoquer une transformation profonde. Le 'criticism' révolutionnaire, d'autre part, est une critique qui vise à modifier radicalement le système en place, et qui est donc capable de provoquer une transformation profonde.

Les révolutionnaires ont donc commencé à travailler de concert avec les syndicats, et à défendre les revendications de leurs collègues au travail. Ils ont commencé à organiser des meetings, à rédiger des tracts, et à distribuer des affiches. Ils ont commencé à s'organiser, et à construire des chaînes de solidarité. Ils ont commencé à penser en termes de lutte de classes, et à comprendre que la lutte contre le capitalisme était la clé de toute solution. Ils ont commencé à comprendre que la révolution était nécessaire, et qu'elle était possible.
There are only a few posters at the gate, again mainly those of the CGT. Some pickets carry CFDT posters. There isn’t even a DPO 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 leaflets 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 CBS has 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 Étudiants 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 CBS 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 employers. As they are here, ‘the police are present and not being 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 ‘democratic ouvrière’ and defend the right of the ‘disruptive elements’ to sell their stuff. A rather radical group of students, some wearing black and white buttons, turn up to distribute their paper Revoltes, which are given an exaggerated publicity on the Gaulist radio and in the columns of the bourgeois press.

This worrying is no doubt superficial 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 labour forces has presented a threat to its privileges.

This is therefore important not to allow these people to come to the gates of our factory, to its offices, to strengthen the ranks of the CGT struggling for these noble objectives.

The Trade Union Bureau, OZ, Renault.
The COT speakers then ask the workers to participate in 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 Ille 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 joke 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'.

The gates, is doing a roaring trade, "This is much good humoured banter. By 11 am thousands of workers have poured out into the warm late May sunshine. An open-air beer and sandwich stall, outside the gate, is doing a roaring trade.

12.30 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 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 demonstration called jointly by the unions, the students' organization (UNEF) and the teachers' associations (FEN and SNEUp).

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. The police are in 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.

Many of the lathes have coloured pictures plastered over them: pineapples and green fields, sun 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 humour bantered. By 11 am thousands of workers have poured out into the warmth of a May morning. An open-air beer and sandwich stall, outside the gate, is doing a roaring trade.

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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 CGT leaders are still striving desperately to avoid a mixing-up, on the streets, of students and workers.

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 in infiltrating groups of 100 or so into parts of the march ahead of them, or behind them. The stalllant 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 ‘CIS - 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 stallant students, grouped around the banner of their paper Clarté reply ‘Université Democratique’. 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’Etat policier’, or ‘Bon anniversaire, mon General’. Whole groups mournfully entone a well-known refrain: ‘Adieu, de Gaulle’. They wave their handkerchiefs, to the great gerriment 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 7.30 pm.

There were banners of every kind: union banners, student banners, political banners, non-political banners, reformist banners, revolutionary banners, banners of the Movement 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, markent men, electricians, Lawyers, nurses, bank employees, building workers, glass and chemical workers, waiters, municipal employees, painters and decorators, gas workers, shop girls, insurance clerks, audion engineers, doctors, farmers, 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 ‘hiers’ (horse-betting), in watching theelly, in their annual ‘conges’ (holidays), and that the working class cannot see beyond the problems of its everyday life. It was, I thought of those thousands, 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, seate gentlemen now bedecked with red flags or carrying slogans such as ‘Libérons nos camarades’. As we pass a hospital aerial, cars endlesly file past 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 ‘Movement 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 'debordement', 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 hundreds 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 thousands of its members from the Paris area. It also summons members from miles away from the city 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.

Those protesting against the dispersion orders are immediately jumped on by the stewards, denounced as 'provo' 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 'provo'. A number of minor punch-ups take place as the stewards are swept aside by these particular contingents. Heated ailments break out, the demonstration turns down the Boulevard Raspail and proceed to the Champ de Mars'.

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 apparatchiks 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.

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 'Ja nous tire 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.

At about 8.00 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 around 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 though the thinnest section of the crowd. The vehicle accelerated, hurling itself into the demonstrators at about 50 miles an hour. The crowd was scattered wildly in all directions. Several people were knocked down and two were seriously injured. Many more narrowly escaped. The
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 them and those around them as isolated and impotent people alienated 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 the enthusiasm of children. Literature stalls sprouted under the wall's 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 factually supported by 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 behind 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 Russian Left in 1917 and about France in 1936. The students were from other universities, telling each other stories of 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. The students were learning 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 Darmagnole and aonal 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 in any case interrupted the level of debate. These 'diversions' may have infuriated some of the more single-minded revolutionaries, but they in any case interrupted the level of debate.

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 slogans: 'Open this door, les tabernacles rochers!' 'Religious 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 new forms of repression and the use of CS gas (even gass) 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 leadership. Political posters in plenty. But also others, proclaiming the new ethos. 'Workers of all lands, enjoy yourselves.' 'Those who carry out a revolution are going to break the bounds of time and space.' 'The future will only contain what we put into it now.' '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).'

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 sacro-sanct premises, as they were being exhorted to by numerous posters proclaiming that the Sorbonne was now open to all. Young workers who 'hadn't been there 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. The message certainly spread. Delegations came from first year 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 was a maze of such corridors: dark, dusty, depressing, and hitherto unnoticed passageways leading from nowhere in particular to nowhere else. Suddenly these corridors had life in a firework of luminous mural wisdom - much of it of Situationist inspiration. Hundreds of people suddenly stopped to read such panegyrics 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).'

Here the student (or for that matter, the unknown soldier was the outrage that put him there.' 'No, we won't be picked up by 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 Mediterranee.' Long live communication, down with telecommunication.'

Masochism today dresses up as reformism.' 'We will claim 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 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 Mediterranee.' Long live communication, down with telecommunication.'

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 Icarian, or the platiste are the nectar of the Gods.' 'Go and die in Naples, with the Club Mediterranee.' Long live communication, down with telecommunication.'

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).'
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, comrades. 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 sliny 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 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, comrades. 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 give the students a chance 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). Wriggling 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 mark 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 hemisphere, 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.

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 imprecated or 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, but on the day of the Revolution, comrades, you wouldn't doubtless tell us to forgo 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 ('Sholay', 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 theses utopian proposals having been accepted the audience rose to a man and sang the loudest, most impassioned 'International' 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 in the development 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 turn their attention than did that of the Sorbonne. It was to prove, however, just as significant an event in the development of revolutionary Paris - with all that that implies in terms of garish display - Censier was its dynamo, the place where things really got done.

Sooner after Censier had been occupied a group of activists commanded 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, that 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 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.

...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 it all together now and take 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 crisis 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'émmerder'
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, demented clapping, the audience broke into a synchronous, rhythmical clapping, apparently reserved for great occasions.

On Thursday, May 16 the Renault Factories at Cleon (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, Kleiber-Colombes at Caudebec, Brusse-Beaumont 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. The Communist Party had been working... hard. The leaflet was signed by the CGT, the CFDT, and the FO. The meeting then decided to send a big deputation to the occupied Renault works. The streets here are very badly lit. There is a sense of intense excitement. It is important we reach the factories before the Stalinists have time to mobilise their big battalions...

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': the students faced with a wall of macists, Trotskyists, 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 factories 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 chomage et de misere' - 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, dogs barking in the distance the singing of revolutionaries songs heard on the air - 'Lettres', '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 'CIS - SS'; 'Charonne'; 'A bas l'Etat policier'. They have not forgotten. Most look on shily 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.

Suddenly we 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, distinct groups of about a hundred Stalinists in a powerful 'Internationale'. Workers in neighbouring cafes come out and join us. This time the Party had not had time to mobilise its militants. It could not physically isolate us.

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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.

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 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 CFS, what the lads inside need most, how the students can help. The men talk freely. 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 rights within the factory. I am not putting these demands in any particular or ideological context. 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, reduced working hours, the right to strike, and of course 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 materially 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.

Question: Mr. Seguy, 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.

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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 'triclores' 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.

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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.

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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.
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. Seguy. My name is Duvauchel. I am the director of the Sud Aviation factory at Nantes.

Seguy: 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 sequestrated, together with about 20 other managerial staff, inside the Sud Aviation factory at Nantes.

Seguy: 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.

Seguy: Have you asked to leave the factory?

Duvauchel: Yes!

Seguy: Was permission refused?

Duvauchel: Yes!

Seguy: 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. 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 mummy-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.

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 Seguy 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, lift heads, railway stations, department stores, locked transatlantic liners, the Panthéon, the Opéra, the Folated Géres and the building of the National Council for Scientific Research were taken over as were the headquarters of the French Football Federation - which all was clearly perceived as being 'to prevent ordinary footballers enjoying football'.
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 'emergency' even in the loosest sense of the term. There was 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 'solaced' 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 confronting the workers, its 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 (éxécutants). 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 'built 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 crises 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 manoeuvers, alert enough 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 unions and non-union 'sous-traitants), 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 able to achieve a movement of which we are speaking here only because it would have been one 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.

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 organizing the work of the regime. 'It's struggles to purely economic objectives that the trade union bureaucrats have so far succeeded in coming to the assistance of the regime.

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, which are archaic and whole 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 confronting the workers, its struggles to purely economic objectives that the trade union bureaucrats have so far succeeded in coming to the assistance of the regime.

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But these students are wrong. One doesn’t get beyond bureau­
cratic 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
reflection. The students and young workers can’t just stay where they are. To ac­
ccept 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 pre­
vailing 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 ‘revo­
lution’ 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.
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 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"—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 which belong to (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.

2. Always wary of the Chinese threat, the PCF for a long time saw the work of Mao and the day after, Renault workers at Cleon 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 did not budge. Caught napping, it contented itself with taking a painful about-face, affirming "no, the CGT has not broken with the students"....

The march of May 13th from République to Denfert-Rochereau was a political act of great importance. The turn-out was the largest: ten days since the liberation (about 900,000 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, the CGT was not to know a revolutionary period in which literally anything was possible.... During the first three days of this period the CGT did not budge. Caught napping, it contented itself with taking a painful about-face, affirming "no, the CGT has not broken with the students"....

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 Gaulist regime. In failing to respond to the profound aspirations of the workers and students, they were not aware of or didn’t care to understand, the large union and political forces, we are fostering the system of management and wage-earners, but also had no intention of overthrowing the Gaulist 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.

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).

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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 was unthinkable that the CGT....would thus betray the confidence of an entire people.

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After seeing Séguy several times I finally realized with certainty 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 Gaulist regime, to put an end to this ‘power of monopolies’ which since 1938 it had never ceased to denounce.

On May 22 at 9pm, the bureau of the CGT published a communiqué of rare insolence opposing the solidarity with the workers planned by 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 communiqué (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 and end to the system of management and wage-earners, but also had no intention of overthrowing the Gaulist 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 pre-condition 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"....
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 preceding 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 the same direction.

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 uncontrollable groupuscules, anarchists and ultra-revolutionaries 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 Deroulede, Waldeck Rochet, after having condemned the "tarnished black flag of anarchism", 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 Séguy's speech at Renault on the 27th proves that he was believed that the workers would welcome as a great victory the results which he had brought to them.
a beginning

We 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 were not fulfilled by the May insurrection -- are necessary for its success.

1. The process -- going from protest 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 of insurrection.

a) The vanguard is not an established political organization leading 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," "bourgeois government," -- slogans which, in the tradition of "Pompidou nos souv" (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 workers 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 having to take on and win the final combat; it could have coordinated the takeover, from below, of the whole sections of the system of production, distribution, administration and stimulation, and stimulated wherever the workers were prepared to try it, the movement from occupying stopped factories to the re-opening and re-organization of the occupied companies based on workers' control. These 'self-management strikes,' tried out in France and Italy in the early 1950's, have signified the 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 vital products; rejecting all negotiations with the bourgeois state and the boss class and waiting for their collapse; 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, 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 "bread and butter issues."
vague promises with which the CGT thought centrists but the boss class itself. As ear­
francs, the 40 hour week, and workers' the intentions of the Communist leaders sure not only the social democrats and the
of the workers' movement throughout the 3, The greatest concern of the leadership continuation of the capitalist system) and
power in the factories are, in France, de­
it's immediate aims ( a base salary of 1,000
forces of anti-revolutionary order in French
by a reinforced state power once again
order to personally reassure it concerning
initiatives, bringing new perspectives and
follow them instead of developing new
organizations, bringing new perspectives and
move to its conclusion were defined as it were
"in absentia" during the recent events.

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 56th of May (the date when Roger Garaudy, in the name of the "status quo" 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 de­

In order to personally reassure it concerning the intentions of the Communist leaders and to give it concrete tokens of their de­

The Communist leadership's overt reason for this was that it was important not to compromise, through "rash acts" or even throughout a revolutionary situation, the political and parliamentary alliance which the CPF and the Left Fed­

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. 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 vision of revolution only from above. On the contrary, if a Leftist majority got into Parliament, De Gaulle 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 who recently became politicized and have discovered a field of possibilities heretofore unimagined. They will continue the struggle and face 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 Greeneman.
first reaction was that which we had always
state, at its base and in its subtlety, in its
great spectacle. It resembles the facist
height it is grandeur and liberalism, a
It differs from a facist state in that at its
The Gauliist regime is a police state.
1.
And here are some answers:
And finally, what purpose does it all serve?
2. During the periods of "calme", the
daily repression swoops down, without
reprove, on those who have no choice
but to keep quiet. On October 17, dozens
of Algerian militants who were demonstra-
ting peaceably, were thrown into the Seine,
dead or alive, in the midst of general in-
difference. ( 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 air-
port 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,
as if traumatized by their own imbecility.
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 natur-
al 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 Guallist police
a serious defeat. It is an extraordinary
lesson of courage and dignity that the youth
give us with bare hands, confronting merc-
enaries armed with all the most modern
weapons -- a recent trade union communiqué
said they are complaining of not yet having
sufficient means of defense! The minister
of the interior and Humanité 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
naivete', 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
make. The police are an integral part
of the capitalistic 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 militiants, ex-
mercenarys ), 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
kate weren't already a goal in itself.
As if it were possible to do something
without beginning something.

Francois Maspero
Cultural Specialist Wanted

An important group specializing in the realization of improvement operations looking for man or woman: degree in sociology, R.E.C. or the equivalent, to work in its department of Cultural Sociological Urban Organization. We offer this young staff member a chance to become a specialist in the matter of cultural implantation and to establish a career at the heart of an expanding group. We ask for a very dynamic collaborator who has sense and taste in human relations and team work and excellent experience in investigation techniques. Send resume and salary requirements.

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 Normal Super. (8 hours a day and five days a week I would earn 3000 francs a month, I spent five years studying. First, two years of preparation for Normal Super.

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.