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of the

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by Pierre Frank

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Pierre Frank

MAY 1968:

FIRST PHASE OF THE FRENCH SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

On June 14, 1968, the day following the French government ban of revolutionary organizations, Pierre Frank was seized by French police and held incommunicado for ten days. It is little accident that Frank was among the first victims of de Gaulle's repressive measures. Secretary of the Internationalist Communist Party (PCI), the French section of the Fourth International, and a prominent voice of revolutionary Marxism in the May-June uprising, Pierre Frank has a long career in French revolutionary politics.

As a teenager in Paris, he was expelled from school because of his radical political views. A few years later, in 1923 or 1924 he joined the Communist Party. In 1929 he was one of a group of Communists who sent a representative to see Leon Trotsky when the Bolshevik leader was exiled to Prinkipo, Turkey. Under Trotsky's guidance, he helped found the Left Opposition in France. By 1931 he was elected to the International Secretariat and in 1932 became one of Trotsky's secretaries in Prinkipo.

As the curtain rose on World War II, Pierre Frank was sentenced to ten years in prison by the Daladier regime because of his "defeatist" activities against the French imperialist army. Escaping to England, he was arrested in October 1940, charged with not registering as an "alien" and sentenced to six months at hard labor. Following this he was rearrested by the British authorities and kept under lock and key until the end of 1943. Only after the war was Frank able to return to France.

The PCI was built in France during the war itself, in defiance of Nazi occupation. It has been active in French politics since the liberation. Its members were persecuted and arrested for supporting colonial rebels during France's war with Vietnam and again in the war with Algeria.

Pierre Frank completed the following article on June 10—four days before his arrest. It covers the period of the May-June revolt prior to de Gaulle's reelection and the institution of repressive acts against revolutionary organizations and their members. In order to facilitate its reading, the article is followed by a brief chronology of events and a glossary of the political, trade-union and other organizations mentioned.

I.

May 1968 will go down in history as the month the French socialist revolution began. Opening with the struggle of the students against police intrusions into the Latin Quarter and the university, this month saw the entire working class entering into struggle, and with it all strata of the working population (the new middle class, the intellectuals, the peasants, etc.). This happened with a unanimity never before known in the past.

All of the country's youth were to be seen in this struggle: the high-school students, university students, the young workers—both employed and unemployed—including the "young hoods" that the bourgeois press, the government ministers, and so many others have slandered, though they are nothing more than the victims of "consumer society." The youth took the lead of a struggle which unfolded in the streets including extremely violent clashes with the repressive forces of the bourgeois state. Strikes, factory occupations, occupations of all sorts of buildings, street demonstrations took place not only in Paris but throughout the entire country. No region was untouched by the gigantic hurricane which swept the country. The capitalist state foundered for several weeks. It recovered its bearings *in extremis* much less thanks to its own strength than to the default, worse, the betrayal of the leaderships which controlled the great majority of the country's vital forces.

The French economy, which had already passed through great struggles like June 1936, had never been paralyzed as it was in May 1968. According to the statistics about 10 million workers were on strike but this does not give a complete picture of such a situation. Tens of thousands of workers (in gas, electricity, the waterworks, and newspaper printing, etc.) continued to work only to

provide for the most elementary needs of the civil population. And they did so by decision of their unions.

The bosses and the government found themselves bereft of all authority over the industrial, commercial, and banking enterprises, the means of communication, and the great modern mass media. The armed forces were obviously insufficient to suppress the movement. The police department employees were on strike. The police themselves threatened to go on strike. It was hard to envisage use of the army, in view of the consequences it would have provoked. The repressive troops (CRS, the Gardes Mobiles, etc.) were tired out after several nights of fighting in the streets of Paris and incessant mobilizations throughout France.

In a situation where the government was disabled for a period of several weeks and the workers traditional political and trade-union leaderships were bypassed by events, the revolutionary center of the Sorbonne arose with extraordinary improvisation. The most diverse revolutionary currents, previously subjected to implacable repression by the bureaucratic apparatuses of the reformists, came together in close proximity. Day after day, for several weeks, out of the ferment of this socialist democracy, an orientation emerged from this center which made it possible to carry the movement beyond all possible expectations.

In the opinion of all observers, this movement went far beyond June 1936. The historic parallels cited went back to Petrograd 1917, to the revolutionary movements of 1918 and 1919, and the first weeks of the Spanish revolution of July-August 1936. No doubt was possible: We were experiencing the first great revolutionary thrust which would reach a peak in a few days and put the question of power on the order of the day. This took place in an economically developed capitalist country (the fifth-ranking in the world). All the problems of the society (economic, political, social, cultural, etc.) were posed on a knife's edge. These problems are those of all highly industrialized capitalist countries. But they are also, in part, the problems of colonial countries (concerning relations of the working class with other social classes), and even of countries where capitalism has been abolished (concerning relations of the working class with the bureaucracy). With good reason, the entire world turned its eyes to France in May 1968.

The battle was still not over in the early days of June. The strike was still being vigorously pursued in the biggest plants, in vital sectors of the economy, in education, etc. But its peak had passed. The conquest of power was no longer on the order of the day. In the wake of this first phase of the socialist revolution a series of great economic struggles are continuing whose results will be very important for future revolutionary waves, determining their initial slogans and their objectives. There also remain a whole series of bases, large or small bastions, where the state, capitalist property

and numerous institutions of capitalist society have been more or less completely put in question.

It is essential to draw a balance sheet of this month of May 1968 as soon as possible, to define what has been achieved, to clarify the perspectives which have opened up, to lay out the main lines of the tasks to come. This is the objective of this pamphlet. In the conditions under which I am writing it I make no claim that it is complete, or that it is exempt from certain inadequacies and perhaps even errors in detail. Nonetheless, I am sure that it will answer the main questions raised in the course of the events and will provide a sufficiently clear basis for the discussion which will inevitably begin in the workers movement and more particularly in the vanguard of the workers movement on the problems posed in May 1968 by the socialist revolution which has begun.

II. The fundamental crisis of French capitalism

The Fundamental Crisis of French Capitalism

For an understanding of the historic meaning of May 1968, the major features of the crisis of French capitalism must be outlined. The great crisis of French capitalism began after the first world war. During part of the 19th century, France was still the second-ranking economic power in the world. After 1918, despite the advantages it drew from the Versailles Treaty, it was no longer anything more than a second-rate country, which moreover had suffered crippling losses. French capitalism had to adjust to its new position at the expense of the workers, by lowering wages or creating unemployment, or else the workers had to eliminate French capitalism.

This crisis took spectacular forms starting in the 1930s. There was a succession of great convulsions in which the political regime changed a number of times: February 6, 1934, a right-wing coup, for the first time succeeding in damaging the parliamentary system and the Third Republic; June 1936, a thrust from the left, the first factory occupations; 1939-40, an abrupt shift to the right, the overthrow of the Third Republic and the establishment of the Vichy regime; 1945-47, a new thrust to the left following the war and the establishment of the Fourth Republic; and in 1958, the coup in Algiers, de Gaulle's coming to power and the establishment of the Fifth Republic. May 1968 fits into this succession as the beginning of a new drive to the left moving toward the overthrow of the Gaullist regime and opening up the perspective of a socialist republic.

While each of these convulsions had its immediate cause in conjunctural phenomena of greater or lesser political importance, each of them developed in such a way as to pose all the social problems. I will not go into all the details which would be brought out by a thorough history of France since 1918, but a fundamental fact must be noted. In none of these thrusts to the right has French capitalism,

owing to a lack of sufficient inner forces, been able to carry its offensive to the point of imposing a fascist solution, a solution which would involve crushing the working class, completely eliminating its organizations, and a merciless decimation of the cadres of these organizations. It was incapable of doing so even at the time which was most favorable to it, the occupation of France by Hitlerite German troops. It has been able only to institute solutions of a bonapartist type.

The most stable of these has been the Gaullist regime. This regime succeeded for some time in deceiving a part of the masses about its real nature because it ended the Algerian war, because it pursued a demagogic international policy, and because it received support from the governments of many recently decolonized countries, and also some workers states, for example the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union saw the Gaullist regime as a disruptive element in the Atlantic alliance and a possible ally for "peaceful coexistence."

In contrast, in each of the left thrusts, the workers first of all and the working masses in general have never lacked militancy and combativity. In every case, they stopped short of overthrowing capitalism only because the leadership of the mass organizations failed to give the order. "You must know how to end a strike," Thorez declared in 1936 [Maurice Thorez, longtime head of the Communist Party of France]. This same Thorez succeeded in getting the resistance (FTP) to disarm voluntarily by invoking the need for "one state, one army, and one police force." The state, the army, and the police force were then under the command of de Gaulle. In May 1968, Seguy [Georges Seguy, head of the CP-led General Federation of Labor (CGT)] could not continue his speech to the point of saying "you must know how to end a strike"; he had to change his line right in the middle of his speech.

But once again—as we will see in another chapter—this movement, which had gone further than ever, which was on the point of bringing the Gaullist government down by its own momentum, did not accomplish this, did not arrive at an anticapitalist conclusion, because of the policy of the working-class leaderships, essentially the CGT and the PCF, because the other leaderships did not have a decisive weight in the working class (the FGDS, the CFDT, and the PSU).

While it can be argued in retrospect how far the movement could have gone in 1936, and while only a minority thought that the "boat had been missed" in 1945-47, a great many understood the betrayal in 1968. These diverse mass thrusts have this simple common denominator: The leaderships have repeatedly betrayed, when all that would have been necessary to overthrow capitalism was for them to have wanted to do it. These leaderships will certainly never change. But there have been important differences in the ob-

jective and subjective conditions of these great working-class mobilizations in France.

In 1936 and 1945-47, the leaderships enjoyed very great prestige and authority among the masses (the Socialist Party and the PCF in 1936, and mainly the PCF in 1945-47). But in May 1968, even before the mobilization began, the Mollet and Mitterrand leaderships in the FGDS and the Waldeck Rochet leadership in the PCF, while still enjoying extensive control over their members and their constituencies, were beginning to encounter critical feelings, doubts, and even a malaise. Before this movement was unleashed it was hard to discern much more than that, and it was impossible to know the real situation that was first manifested in the course of the mobilization itself.

In 1936, the movement in France did indeed carry over into several countries. In Spain also the mass movement attained revolutionary breadth in the face of the Franco coup. But the international context was then dominated by the rise of Nazism in Europe and moreover by the rise of Stalinism in the USSR (the Moscow trials, etc.). In 1945-47, Hitlerism was defeated by the alliance of the imperialist democracies and the Soviet Union. However, the Soviet Union under Stalin's leadership pledged itself not to challenge the capitalist order. And in the Soviet Union, the government was again preparing to begin its bloody purges (the "Doctors' Plot," Zhdanovism, etc.).

In 1968, the international situation was marked first of all by the victorious Tet offensive, as well as by numerous uprisings in the colonial countries. It was marked also by the resistance of the Afro-Americans in the United States, by a "de-Stalinization" which, however shallow, had eliminated the most oppressive aspects of Stalinism in the movement which swept away Novotny in Czechoslovakia. And finally, it was marked by growing student movements everywhere in the imperialist countries.

In all the great mobilizations of the French workers, one element has played the role of detonator. In 1936, it was the electoral victory of the Popular Front, that is, an event of an essentially parliamentary character. In 1945-47, it was the liberation brought about by the joint military victory of the imperialist democracies and the Soviet Union over Nazism. This victory was thus stamped with an equivocal character, an ambiguity from the class standpoint—an equivocality and ambiguity which was one of the characteristics of the Resistance. This resulted in an inner weakness in the movement of the period which made it possible for it to be liquidated relatively quickly.

The detonator in May 1968 was the student struggle. Nothing could be more misleading than to characterize this struggle as "petty-bourgeois" simply because the great majority of students are the children of the bourgeoisie or petty bourgeoisie. The ideology inspiring the students of opposition to the neocapitalist consumer so-

ciety, the methods they used in their struggle, the place they occupy and will occupy in society (which will make the majority of them white-collar employees of the state or the capitalists) gave this struggle an eminently socialist, revolutionary, and internationalist character. Thus, while the detonator in the preceding mass movements was either "to the right" of the movement, or eclectic from the class point of view, this time it was to the left of the movement, with a very high political level in a revolutionary Marxist sense.

There were revolutionary minorities in the 1936 and 1945-47 movements which were in the vanguard of the movement as a whole and opposed the mass reformist leaderships. But these minorities were, all told, extremely few in numbers. They were really "grouplets." For example, in the big parade that took place at the end of May 1936 at the Mur des Federes on the eve of the factory occupations, the group rallied around the Trotskyists—the only minority really existing at the time—was on the order of a thousand persons, who were ejected after a few brawls. In 1945-47, the revolutionary minorities were stronger, but in the climate created by the military victory, left oppositionists were unpopular. A few slanders were enough to keep the revolutionaries from gaining a broad hearing among the masses.

However, the May 1968 experience showed—at the Champ de Mars, at the Gare de Lyon, at the demonstration in Charlety stadium, at the demonstration in Montparnasse, at the Gare d'Austerlitz—that while the notorious "wildmen," "grouplets," "provocateurs," etc., depending on whether you choose the government's terminology, *l'Humanite's* [official organ of the PCF], or some others', were of course still a minority, they were by no means an insignificant minority. This minority was capable of bringing together tens of thousands of people in demonstrations, who effectively stood up against the repressive forces of bourgeois order.

To sum up, May 1968 occurred under political conditions far superior to those governing the previous mobilizations of the French workers. The new mass upsurge began at a much higher level with initial conditions much more favorable than in the past to a socialist outcome. It would certainly be wrong to draw only optimistic conclusions from this. The fight, although not a simple or easy one, comes in circumstances which objectively and subjectively offer much better perspectives than in the past.

III. The bourgeois leadership

A revolutionary situation is also distinguished, according to Lenin, by the bourgeoisie's inability to govern the country. What was the condition of the bourgeois leadership in France during the month of May 1968.

The bourgeois leadership was itself notoriously deficient. Let us leave aside Pompidou's and de Gaulle's trips abroad, which testified to their failure to face up to the situation. The almost total silence of these two men was not the result of calculation. The student movement and then the workers movement had exceeded anything the bourgeoisie had experienced in its history. There was talk in a number of quarters, for example in a newspaper like *Le Monde*, noted for the seriousness of its analyses, about the government's "errors." This, however, was disregarding the lessons of history which show that a worn-out system commits such "errors" from the simple fact that every one of its acts rebounds against it. It cannot be said that de Gaulle decided to launch a referendum with the idea of giving it up a few days later. Just like the working-class leaderships, the leadership of French capitalism found itself left behind and outflanked. De Gaulle really considered resigning. His radio interview can be believed on this score. The statements of Mitterrand, Mendes-France, Giscard d'Estaing, and several others on May 28 were also in line with such an assumption. In those days the bourgeois political world was searching for an alternative.

It was only when he found himself in an extremely difficult, almost desperate situation that de Gaulle, who is a political tactician in the grand style, decided to move with the utmost audacity. The movement was close to breaking through all restraints. De Gaulle understood that in these circumstances, the final impetus could only be given by the opposing leadership. On spontaneity alone, by its own undirected strength, the movement had advanced much further than anyone could have imagined. To continue to advance it now needed a leadership which would dare to give the signal. De Gaulle knows the Communist Party's men well; he was able to use them in his 1946 government.* He knew that they were incapable of such audacity. Having nothing but contempt, moreover, for "politicians on the shelf" of the Mollet or Mitterrand type, he decided to throw a scare into the lot of them. He accused the PCF of a policy which it had not the least intention of pursuing. He threatened a repression which

* Here is what de Gaulle wrote in his memoirs on the presence of PCF leaders in his government in 1945:

"Taking into account previous circumstances, events since then, the necessities of today, I hold that the return of Maurice Thorez as head of the Communist Party can yield more advantages at present than difficulties . . .

"Inasmuch as in place of revolution, the Communists seek preponderance in a parliamentary regime, society runs less risk . . .

"As for Thorez, while trying to advance the affairs of Communism, on many occasions he was to serve the public interest. On his return to France, he helped put an end to the last vestiges of the 'patriotic militia' whom some of his people obstinately sought to maintain in a new underground. Insofar as the gloomy, hard rigidity of his party permitted him, he opposed the attempts at encroachment of the liberation committees and the acts of violence to which the over-excited groups turned. Among the workers—they were numerous—particularly the miners, who listened to his harangues, he did not stop advocating the slogan of working to the utmost and of producing, cost what it might. Was this simply a political tactic? It's not my business to figure it out. It was enough for me that France benefitted." (*Le Salut*, pp. 100-101.)

made these spineless leaders tremble. And he offered them elections in exchange for their torpedoing the movement. Elections! These men found themselves back on their favorite ground! And thus de Gaulle saved his regime *in extremis*.

There was no long premeditated operation on his part. He resorted to a last-minute improvisation, a very slick improvisation which produced a guaranteed effect. However, it would be wrong to view this as a real solution for the situation. The strikes are continuing with great firmness. The elections are not entirely safe for de Gaulle. And even if he succeeds in surmounting this hurdle, difficulties will very soon reappear. If, for a period, a certain degree of repression could produce some results, other mass thrusts will show up profoundly marked by the experience of May 1968.

In conclusion, the French bourgeoisie, which is probably the world's most experienced in the matter of mass movements, showed in the May mobilizations that it was not its intelligence and slickness that saved it this time. It was the reformist policy of the PCF leadership and its still very strong control over decisive masses of workers which saved the de Gaulle regime and the capitalist system. The bourgeois economist, P. Uri, a member of Mitterrand's "shadow government," talked in the *London Times*, June 5, about an "objective conspiracy" between the Gaullist government and the PCF leadership. As two British bourgeois journalists described it:

"But the paradox which underlies this controlled chaos is that the Communist unions and the Gaullist government they appear to be challenging are really on the same side of the barricades. They are defending French society as we know it . . . The Communist Party thus stood revealed as the ultimate bastion of the consumer society which the student Bolsheviks are pledged to destroy. It is as if Washington and Moscow had got together to put down North Vietnam." (P. Seale and M. McConville, *The Observer*, May 19.)

IV. The stages of May 1968

Following the movement day by day, one can distinguish stages which succeeded each other with a thoroughly remarkable internal logic.

The first stage began on May 3 with the entry of the police into the Sorbonne courtyard and the immediate resistance of the students on the Boulevard Saint-Michel. It reached its peak on May 10, when the high-school strike was followed by the demonstration which started out from the Place Denfert-Rochereau and returned on the Boulevard Saint-Michel, to end in the night of the barricades on the Rue Gay-Lussac and the neighboring streets.

This opened the way for the second stage, which began with the 24-hour general strike and the demonstrations of May 13. Under

the impetus of this gigantic demonstration, the workers began to strike about 48 hours later, beginning a general strike with factory occupations. The movement reached a very high point (about 10 million strikers, to say nothing of numerous and many-sided demonstrations of all orders) toward the end of the week of May 20 to 25. During this week the dreary CGT demonstrations were politically juxtaposed to the demonstration at the Gare de Lyon, which culminated in a new night of the barricades and revolts in many parts of Paris. At this point, the government, the bosses, and the trade-union leaders hurriedly plunged into marathon negotiations lasting about 30 hours.

On Monday May 27 the trade-union leaders were barely given time to present the provisions of the Grenelle agreements to the workers in the principal factories (Renault, Citroen, etc.). These agreements were indignantly rejected by a unanimous hand vote. Then the movement entered into a third, politically decisive stage in which the question of power was posed. The government was impotent. There were demonstrations in the street in favor of different formulas for a government to succeed the de Gaulle regime. At Charlety stadium, the ranks were for "power to the workers." However, the silhouette of Mendes-France stood out on the speakers' platform, offering himself both to the bourgeoisie and the working masses as a "left de Gaulle" to replace the right-wing de Gaulle. On May 29, from the Bastille to the Gare Saint-Lazare, the workers of Paris and its red suburbs responded to the appeals of the CGT and the PCF for a "people's government of democratic union" "with Communist participation."

But these were only whims of the leaders since no slogan was given for any action aimed at overthrowing the Gaullist government. Strengthened by this indecision, this inertia, and by the electoral and parliamentary cretinism which deeply marks all the left leaders, de Gaulle decided to turn and fight. He stirred up every poltroonish, craven, and conservative element in the country. He denounced a purported danger from the PCF, which was completely nonplussed. He threatened to resort to military means. And, in place of a referendum which nobody even wanted to consider, he offered the left a goody—legislative elections in the coming weeks, following the dissolution of a National Assembly which had made itself an object of ridicule by the servility of the Fifth Republic mini-majority and the impotence of the minority to gather the few votes necessary to get a motion of censure adopted.

With de Gaulle's May 30 speech a new stage opened up. The mass leaderships accepted the elections, creating an extreme fragmentation of the movement. The all-out general strike which objectively posed the question of power gave way to powerful strikes for essentially economic objectives, which were negotiated separately with the bosses or the leaderships of the overseeing ministries. This, as I write, is

the phase we are in now. As a revolutionary thrust, a revolutionary crisis making possible the overthrow of the Gaullist regime and even the capitalist system, May 1968 is now ended.

The strike movement will not dissipate itself overnight. These strikes will continue for a more or less prolonged period in many sectors. Analyzing these strikes in detail is outside the scope of this pamphlet. It is enough here to say that they must be waged vigorously with the maximum cohesion on the strike front so as to obtain the best results in winning the economic demands.

In this new stage, revolutionaries are concerned not only with improving the workers' living conditions, which is always the case for them. The new period of the crisis of the capitalist system will not end with the present strikes. The socialist revolution will pass through new waves and new revolutionary crises. In order for these to start in the best conditions, it is not unimportant that the workers come out of the present strikes free from any feeling of failure, or of frustration, and that they end the strikes as they began them, in a very militant way.

V. Characteristics of the movement

What were the essential characteristics of the movement of May 1968? Its first characteristic, which struck everyone, was its extensiveness. Ten million strikers—France has never known such a movement. It is probable no big industrial country has experienced one like it or similar to it in proportion to population.

This movement—and this is another of its characteristics—did not include only workers. The industrial proletariat and the agricultural proletariat in the strict sense of the word, as well as most categories of white-collar workers, were encompassed by it. Besides the teachers and students who originated the movement, the participation of the high-school students, and parallel to this, of a large number of young workers, of very young people from 14 to 18 years of age, is an absolutely new phenomenon in history. Very young people have participated in revolutionary periods before, but this was always limited and never included the great bulk of adolescents. This is a phenomenon which would merit a serious sociological study. It is moreover an enormously promising development. All who closely followed the participation of these young people were struck, let me say for my part, amazed, by the seriousness and high political consciousness they exhibited above and beyond the enthusiasm of their age. This bears a promise for the movement in the coming years of an abundance of activists and cadres who will already have considerable experience at an age when recruitment to youth organizations generally used to begin.

The movement drew in a whole series of categories belonging sociologically to the petty bourgeoisie. At the side of the strikers

were the greater part of the intellectuals and of the artists. Likewise, an important part of the new middle classes (technicians, etc.) joined in with the strikers. If I am not mistaken, this was the first time that the CGC took a favorable stand toward the workers demands; it even formally gave permission for its members to go to the May 13 demonstration if they wished. The liberal professions (doctors, architects, etc.) were also drawn into this movement, some of their members demonstrating against the high priests of their orders. Even the lawyers were stirred up against the archaic rules which govern them; even the judges were not left unaffected by the situation, and all the more so inasmuch as the government took a very cavalier attitude toward them during the student struggles.

Sectors as blase as the journalists, as neutral as the public gardeners, as little politically concerned as the professional football players, and so on, were set in motion by this movement.

Among the peasants many demonstrators declared themselves outright for solidarity with the workers' and students' movements. I will only mention the ranks of the army. All reports agree that they followed the events with the greatest interest and that it would not have been possible to range them against the striking workers.

Even the police forces felt it necessary to address themselves through the proper hierarchical channels, to let the authorities know that it would be a test of conscience for them if they were sent against workers fighting for their demands. When cops start talking about conscience . . .

* * *

Another characteristic of the movement was that it bypassed bourgeois legality. May saw many street demonstrations, very strong demonstrations, for which no one had asked authorization — no more than the strikers had considered it necessary to give legal notice five days before going out on strike.

These demonstrations were not all of the same character. There were still some which proceeded calmly, quietly, and spiritlessly at the wish of their organizers and with the tacit approval of the authorities. And there were others which attained a high political level and did not shrink from confrontation with the repressive forces, giving free rein to the most varied methods of struggle.

The various demonstrations which took place in Paris expressed *in the streets* the various opposing political currents of the movement. These were the most remarkable illustration of the different orientations seeking to lead the movement toward different political objectives. Because, for all practical purposes, power was "in the street," politics was carried on in the streets. This constituted a uniquely potent school of politics.

* * *

One essential characteristic of a revolutionary period was present which cannot be overstressed. In such periods, different mass actions

of greater or lesser duration and varying scope cripple the authority of the state, of the bosses, of those institutions whose basis lies in capitalist society. In Marxist terms, manifold mass actions lead to the creation of more or less prolonged dual power, that is to the creation of organs or forms, often only embryonic, which are outside the framework of capitalist society or the prevailing system, and which, as they progress could become the leading bodies of a new society. In the decomposition of capitalist society and its state, the elements of a socialist society began to form from the ground up. The balance of forces compelled the capitalist government, temporarily of course, to tolerate or accept these socialist elements. Instances of "dual power" were often produced independently of the consciousness of those who initiated them.

Here are examples: The universities and many educational institutions obviously broke most clearly with the government. They were suffering under a statute instituted by Napoleon I, and they were also the establishments in which self-government could be established with the least difficulties. It is also in this sphere that no solution has been achieved, that relations with the government have not been reestablished, and where a multiplicity of conflicts can be expected. Attempts at reorganizing the existing structures were also made by professors and high-school students; and they did not fail to run into resistance from the administration. What was attempted in the medical schools naturally carried over into hospitals linked to medical education.

I cannot go into detail here on many instances where authorities in the plants were challenged. Were there not many cases of plant managers locked in their offices or forbidden access to the plants? During the strike, the strike committees—even when they were only the old trade-union executive boards under another name—were led to confiscate plant property to assure continuation of the strike (Saclay . . .). In certain cases, the strike committees spread out beyond their respective plants, entered into negotiations with suppliers and laid the initial groundwork for a resumption of work without the bosses. The problems of guaranteed employment and hiring were put on the agenda (CSF) in Brest.

In services, the employees often exercised the decisive supervisory power. Postal clerks made the decisions about the texts of telegrams to determine whether or not they were urgent.

Some localities found themselves under the control of the trade unions for all practical purposes (in Nantes and Saint-Nazaire, local authorities in actuality served only as messengers between the unions and the government). In Caen, passage in and out of the city was under the control of the strikers for a whole day. In a great number of cases groups of citizens took steps with little concern for legality or bourgeois property; land and buildings were

occupied and used to meet needs which had been neglected or ignored before by both the appointed and elected officials.

The printing industry merits comment. The leadership of the printing unions, by an agreement between the reformist and Stalinist leaders, permitted daily newspapers to appear and consequently the bourgeois press continued being published. True, in certain circumstances the workers demanded changes in headlines (*Figaro*) or even refused to bring out a paper (*La Nation*) when the content was directly prejudicial to the strike. In these cases, the workers amended the decision of their union organization in the right way.

But this decision held another not altogether innocent aspect. The strike was to be applied to all of the weekly press and all periodicals. The result was that the wealthy publications which wanted to be printed abroad, while with rare exceptions, all the vanguard papers, whose financial means are limited, were unable to appear. In other words, while the bourgeois press and the reformist and Stalinist press could express itself freely, revolutionary militants were up against enormous difficulties getting their views into print.

Obviously, this was a stratagem of the reformists and Stalinists in which they conspired like thieves. Only the proofreaders' union, which was particularly sensitive to the problem, adopted the proposition in a resolution: "it [the proofreaders' union] declares itself for the freedom to publish *by the strikers themselves* all publications supporting the workers and students movement, whether daily or periodical."

One sphere where the question of relations with the government took an acute form was radio and television. On one hand, the government, which was so zealous about the "right to work," deprived the over-the-border radio and television stations (the only stations broadcasting which are not under government control) of the radio-telephones they had rented, to prevent them from broadcasting accounts of the revolutionary demonstrations and the savage repressions of the CRS and the Gardes Mobiles. On the other hand, under the pressure of events and general indignation, the radio and TV workers (ORTF) found the majority of its personnel, including journalists who were not known in the past for independence, refusing to carry on a systematic dissemination of official lying.

And finally the day came, at a heightened moment of the crisis, when Geismar [head of SNESup during the crisis], Sauvageot [head of the UNEF], and Cohn-Bendit could be heard and seen on television. And this single broadcast showed the damage that merely honest radio and television could do to the government. While the government seemed to abandon any idea of reestablishing its "order" in the universities for a while, it was at no time disposed to making any essential concessions in the political management of ORTF. A battle is being waged there which concerns all the working people. Will this office, whose financial support comes from them, remain the monopoly of the Gaullist mafia (which formed an anonymous

committee calling for the dismissal of certain journalists by name)? Or will it remain open, even if not completely, to a confrontation of ideas and points of view? In the present circumstances, when even the most politically bland large formations are excluded, revolutionary organizations and militants cannot hope to be heard.

The most developed form of "dual power" is in the Sorbonne itself. Bourgeois laws stop at the perimeter of this building, which used to be a school of scholastic theology. The police do not enter. Immunity is assured there for those who break bourgeois laws. Cohn-Bendit, who was banned from France, lived there in safety. Socialist democracy is undergoing an unlimited development. The Sorbonne is self-governing. I am told that for some time the police have been checking papers of those entering and leaving. They are doing this at a time when police and customs forces on the borders of France have almost literally evaporated. At the Sorbonne, they no longer pay any attention to the government's decisions in educational matters, and not only in educational matters. Demonstrations are decided on there that really amount to attempted sorties into different countries, and not always peaceful ones. The word "foreigner" has no meaning, except insofar as men are given the means for preparing a struggle for socialism directed at their respective countries. The Sorbonne is, so to speak, the first free territory of the Socialist Republic of France.

Since the movement did not attain the end it could have, that is, the conquest of power, it is now reduced to strikes which are holding more or less to a united front. But it is obvious that before the next revolutionary wave, these islands of "dual power" will be subjected to attacks by the bourgeois government aimed at eliminating them. This is a problem I will examine further on in connection with the preparation for future revolutionary struggles.

Finally, the movement gave birth to manifold spontaneous forms of organization, with and without connections to previously existing organizations. No one could fail to be impressed by the number of leaflets from every quarter, alike from old organizations, more or less ephemeral new organizations, and individuals themselves. All of this testified to the impetus which socialist revolution gave to the liberation of man, from its first steps, even before its triumph.

Some have thought to display their wit by denigrating the Sorbonne occupation as a carnival. This is not very far removed from de Gaulle's thinking that it was a "chienlit" [a crude military expression meaning roughly "a shitty mess"]. In fact, neglecting a few things which weren't too serious, the Sorbonne revealed the creative power of revolution, its liberation of the creative initiative of masses and individuals alike. Life at the Sorbonne is not characterized by the "excesses" but all the creative ferment, the unquestionable liberation of the human spirit, what it would take a body of thinkers years to conceive — if then.

I will return to some of these questions in approaching the subject of the tasks of the revolutionary vanguard as it emerged in this movement. One task is to defend these gains. Only the living movement itself can sift out what it has created and eliminate what it does not find worthwhile. We must not fall into the trap which will certainly be there, of putting the spotlight on certain "excesses," shocking to petty-bourgeois opinion, in order to discredit the conquests of the revolutionary movement of May 1968, thus enabling bourgeois repression to liquidate them.

VI. The mass movement and the traditional leaderships

In studying the various stages of the movement closely, the following conclusions may be drawn. Within the "detonator" group ["detonator" is the term the students themselves used], there were several elements capable of playing a leading role: political groups and the UNEF and SNESup leaderships, which included politically educated militants independent of the traditional leaderships and opposed to their policies. Without exaggerating the forces on which these UNEF and SNESup leaders based themselves, or the strength of the politically conscious groups, it can be said that these few "dozen wildmen," in the objective conditions of the revolutionary crisis, played a considerable role in touching off the movement and later in advancing it through the various stages I have pointed out. They continued to perform this function up until the last stage, in which the "detonator" could have only worked again had exceptional circumstances developed — and this was not the case, as will be seen further on.

Once it was off the ground under the impetus of the "detonator," the workers movement itself went forward despite its traditional leaderships. These leaderships held back from demonstrating solidarity with the students when they were struggling against the police. They wanted a demonstration on May 15 only; but following the night of the barricades of May 10-11, they found themselves obliged, under the pressure of popular anger, to declare a 24-hour general strike for May 13.

Once that day was over, they thought they were back to peace and quiet, when, spontaneously, the workers — essentially the young workers — began to occupy factories without any directive from the unions. Once more, the union leaderships only recognized the de facto situation this created. They negotiated with the government and the bosses under the shock of the night of rebellions on May 24, but they did so ignoring the workers' real desires and so again found themselves outdistanced on May 27.

The leaderships of the CFDT and FO, whose respective influence in the working class was limited, can be left aside. No one expected the CFDT or FO to assume a vanguard role. The CGT leadership,

however, had behind it the decisive battalions of the working class, as was seen in the demonstration of May 29. While revolutionary minorities were conscious of the pernicious role the CGT leadership could play because of its allegiance to the policy of the PCF, the large masses of the workers placed their hopes in this leadership.

The CGT and PCF leadership was outdistanced by the mass movement as early as May 3 and for all the days following. It was only on May 29—or four weeks late—that it seemed to regain the leadership of the actions by calling for a political change and the establishment of a "people's government of democratic union." While it was still being constantly outflanked to the left by the mass movement, it strove to limit the movement's advance by directing its principal blows against "ultraleftists," "provocateurs," etc. At no time did it undertake to criticize the leaderships of the other trade union federations, and with reason. However, it felt the need to denounce and even break with UNEF—and in harsh terms. This bureaucratic PCF and CGT leadership must have thought that once the "ultraleftists" were denounced and eliminated the movement would return to "order." Hadn't it been the case for many years that the CGT's "monitors" forcibly removed "ultraleftists" and other "provocateurs" from demonstrations organized by the CGT without the least altercation with the police? Hadn't it been seen how these disrupters were eliminated who threatened the "calm" and "dignity" of the CGT's demonstrations, that is, threatened to break agreements reached beforehand with the police? The enemy is on the left, that was the CGT and PCF leaders' slogan. And that meant not only the "ultraleftists," but the entire mass movement which was moving in a left direction.

* * *

It was not, however, so much its utterances which proved particularly harmful in the course of the movement. This movement had such power that it very often ignored these. What was chiefly harmful to the movement was the fragmentation which the CGT leadership maintained and fostered and in which it was followed by the leaders of the other trade-union federations. The students and teachers as well as the high-school students were first of all carefully divided from the workers. Everything was done to deepen this separation. For the universities, the CGT and PCF put forward slogans like "A Democratic and Modern University" which had nothing in common with the demands of the striking students and teachers. In practice, the factory gates were closed to the students, who the CGT leaders feared would contaminate the workers with their "ultraleft" politics. In order to facilitate this result, the leaders also did their utmost to reduce the number of strikers occupying the factories, urging the majority to stay home most of the time, so that the factories were chiefly occupied by those elements which were considered most reliable—from these leaders' standpoint.

Furthermore, their negotiations with the government — which should not have been considered a valid party to discussion in the first place — were conducted right from the start in a way that divided the workers of the private sector, those in the nationalized sectors, and salaried personnel. In other words, there was no general strike for these leaders. They refused to launch this slogan at one time apparently under the pretext that the general strike was already an accomplished fact and didn't need to be called. But the reality of this was their fear that if they had issued a general strike slogan they would have had to set political objectives because political demands alone expressed the common denominator of the movement struggle. These bureaucrats saw the movement only as an arithmetical sum of separate and distinct economic struggles in which each group was negotiating on its own account. This was their policy in the weeks preceding the Rue de Grenelle negotiations and during them; it remained the same immediately following the rejections of these agreements by the workers.

Even at the time when the CGT organized the May 29 demonstrations it did not establish any link between the immediate demands and the slogan of "a people's government." It never declared that the general strike, nonexistent in its eyes since it had not been called, had the objective of creating this "people's government." Finally, when de Gaulle, to create a red scare, accused the PCF and the CGT of conducting a political strike with the aim of changing the government in the country, both organizations rejected this accusation. At last, the PCF and CGT leaderships aligned themselves with de Gaulle's decision to hold legislative elections.

Thus, the CGT leadership, which had rejected the accusation that it was following a revolutionary policy (and certainly did not follow such a policy), which claimed that all political problems were the sole preserve of the political parties, reconciled itself to politics by floundering in parliamentarism. The CGT, which never failed to say all through the mobilizations that it was only concerned with economic demands and that governmental problems were the business of political parties, which ignored the question of government as long as it could and later rejected anything remotely approaching a revolutionary orientation, only began to show signs of political life when de Gaulle put the question on an electoral basis.

Turning to the PCF's own policy through May, first of all, like the CGT, it directed almost all its fire against the "ultraleftists." After the *l'Humanite* article by Marchais, the organizational secretary of the PCF, denouncing "the German Cohn-Bendit" on May 3 — the very day the struggle began — hardly a day passed without some more or less severe and more or less crudely expressed condemnation of "ultraleftists." The variations in this regard are not without interest. It is easy to show from the columns of *l'Humanite* that the virulent denunciation of the first days was progressively (if this adverb can be used in this instance) attenuated as the move-

ment took rapid leaps forward and grew, that it took a sharper turn just before any possibility that the leaders would be outflanked, and that it assumed a heightened form after de Gaulle's speech and above all as soon as the back-to-work movement developed. Now that elections are the order of the day, monopolizing the PCF leaders' attention, the "ultraleftists" are increasingly becoming the target of virulent attacks.*

Throughout May, the PCF leadership's favorite term for attacking revolutionary militants was "ultraleftist." Now it is resorting to the term "provocateur." The June 8 issue of *l'Humanite* is a choice specimen in this regard. The "provocateurs" at Flins were not the government and the Gardes Mobiles but the students along with Geismar from the SNESup, who went there to express their solidarity, with workers driven out of the factory and to fight alongside them against the forces of repression. The students there were not organized in disciplined commando groups (which would not have been a bad idea in facing the forces of "order"). However, *l'Humanite*, through its published statements, can only be said to have played the role of an informer. These are the real provocations whose infamous ends must be denounced. And the reason for the PCF's outburst can be found explicitly stated in a declaration by the CGT Railway Workers Federation, which is Seguy's own union: Incidents with the state forces, they say, could have a bad effect on the election campaign. The distance from this to condemning those who came to support strikers is not long. After all, the Stalinists are not novices in these matters. Didn't one Stalinist secretary of the CGT declare in December 1945 "strikes are the weapon of monopolies?"

* * *

But the "enemy on the left" slogan is only one side of the CGT leadership's policy. How did it conduct itself toward its right, that is toward the FGDS?

The line the PCF leadership has been following for some years is well known. It wants to reach a "common program" with the FGDS to wage a joint election campaign. It was rather neatly added that this would be linked to a mass movement of "unrivaled breadth." One doesn't know whether for Waldeck Rochet this meant a revolutionary movement, which is doubtful, or whether his vision of such a movement corresponded to the one which occurred in 1968. In passing it can be remarked that he isn't known for such imagination. In any case, when this movement of "unrivaled breadth" occurred, he did not seem to recognize it or to feel any need to draw conclusions from it. From the first day and almost up until the end of May he stepped up his appeals and letters to Mitterrand to speed up the negotiations on a common program. This leadership refused

* It should not be forgotten that the UNEF and CGT leaders could not come to an understanding because the CGT leadership refused to condemn the government's measure banning Cohn-Bendit from France. What authority will the protestations of the PCF or the CGT have tomorrow when the government expels foreign workers? Their aversion to "ultraleftists" has taken precedence for them over solidarity with foreign militants struck by administrative measures. Of course, the Stalinists never defend oppositionists persecuted by the bourgeoisie.

to serve as an "auxiliary" (its own term) for UNEF in organizing a demonstration against the Algerian war in 1960, but pleaded day after day to the FGDS to agree to a meeting to negotiate this mysterious "common program." Moreover, no one knows what this program could be since the "Declaration of February 1968" was not to serve as the model. The PCF did not want to be an "auxiliary" of UNEF in the struggle against the Algerian war; but it was acting as if it was anxious to be an auxiliary of the FGDS, on the basis of no-one-knows-what program, at a time when the mass movement had reached an exceptional peak.

From May 3 to 27, the PCF leadership did not advance in action a single slogan on the question of the government. Its decision was, so to speak, subordinated to an agreement with the FGDS on this "joint program" which no one has yet seen. The PCF leadership thus had no political solution of its own for the crisis for more than 25 days. For it, everything depended on an agreement with the FGDS. Does this leadership, after that, still dare to claim that it is leading the party of the working class, and even that it is its vanguard?

But the PCF leadership made a turn toward the end of May, declaring itself for a "people's government of democratic unity" and calling for the constitution of "committees of action" for such a government. A few preliminary words are necessary. First of all, one cannot find any definition of the content of such a government in the CP press. "With Communist participation," PCF agitators chanted in the May 29 demonstrations. But, assuming this, who would they be "participating" with? The FGDS, one might think. There is a small difficulty in this, which I will take up right after noting one other point. The PCF leadership used the term "action committee," which refers to manifold organizations created during the May mobilization with a policy quite different from the one the CP has been following. Here, the CP duplicated the operation it carried out a few months earlier when it created "Vietnam Committees" totally different from those which for long months had been waging a real struggle for Vietnamese victory and which the CP continually fought as "ultraleftist." When it does not slander the "ultraleftists," the PCF tries to mix up political labels. It creates "action committees" whose objective in regard to real mass action is inaction.

Having said this, we can return to the question of the government itself. The formula "people's government of democratic union" did not drop out of the blue. While the PCF leadership was pleading heart and soul with the FGDS leadership to come to an understanding on the "joint program" which did not seem to be about to see the light of day, a little operation had been plotted for several days by the FGDS leadership and other forces on the left. A good many people were aware of it or in on it and it was revealed at the very moment the PCF (also on to it) presented its new formula.

The May movement itself posed the question of government. This was correctly appreciated even in Gaullist ranks. It was then that

Mitterrand, having totally forgotten the existence of his "shadow government," made a declaration in favor of a "government of transition" which had little in common with a special alliance between the FGDS and the PCF and consequently with an FGDS-PCF government. Mitterrand added that he was ready to take the lead of such a government, but—oh, what rare generosity for the political world!—others were as worthy to lead it as he, for example, Mendes-France. The name which had been quietly whispered about for some days was finally pronounced publicly.

What was the meaning of this political operation? Mendes-France did not exclude participation of Communists in his government, but at the same time Lecanuet* himself would not have done less. Mendes-France added that such a "provisional government" should not be based on a "concoction" of different political parties. This became very clear. The operation consisted in replacing the right bonapartist government of de Gaulle with an equally bonapartist government, but a "left" one, with Mendes-France. This would not be a government based on a parliamentary majority but one which would continue playing the game of balancing between opposing social forces in the country. This balancing game would be more anchored to the forces on the left in distinction to that anchored to the forces of the right in de Gaulle's time. Mendes-France is no novice in this type of operation. His government in 1954 was the groundbreaker. It contained, moreover, several politicians who have since reappeared in de Gaulle's governments (among others, Fouchet [Minister of Education under de Gaulle]).

In the face of such a powerful movement de Gaulle's "strong government" might no longer be the most indicated solution for French capitalism. There was, however, no question of a return to bourgeois democracy. Another team under the leadership of a so-called man of the left would have operated in the same way as de Gaulle.

The PCF leadership saw a danger to itself in this attempt. Hadn't it served before (when Thorez was its leader) in such a government led by de Gaulle? It wanted a government, whether led by Mitterrand or someone else, in which it could bring pressure to bear—not for the victory of socialism (if it had wanted that, it would not have needed to take a detour through Mitterrand or anyone else). What it was seeking was essentially concessions in a direction favorable to what the Kremlin wants—notably in international policy. A parliamentary government of the Mitterrand type would have been more sensitive to pressure than a bonapartist government of the Mendes-France type. In the minds of its organizers, the May '20 demonstration for "a people's government," ostensibly directed against de Gaulle was at least as much against a Mendes-France coalition.

Finally, when de Gaulle decided to turn and fight, the first response to his decision to call legislative elections came from Waldeck

* The leader of the Centrists or the party of "Progress and Modern Democracy." This party is identified with a program of bourgeois modernization and strengthening the "Atlantic Alliance."—Ed.

Rochet. De Gaulle, he said, had only adopted the PCF's own demand on this score. The PCF leadership then called on all PCF members to roll up their sleeves for the coming elections, which could only be done by draining the energy devoted to continuing strikes.

One can legitimately doubt the PCF leadership's desire to oust de Gaulle. Reading the Soviet and East European press shows that de Gaulle has the favor of the governments in these countries. He has been enthusiastically received there in recent years. A change appeared only after his recent anti-Communist statements. While this is debatable, there can be no hesitation on another point. In a pinch, the CP might replace de Gaulle's regime with another, but not on the basis of a mass movement like the one in May. It wants to do this only on the basis of an electoral success. This is less dangerous for the government which could result.

Let us sum up the May 1968 balance sheet of the Stalinist PCF and CGT leadership:

- It opposed the revolutionary struggle of the fighting students and did everything possible to prevent a political and organizational link between them and the workers.

- It divided the various categories of workers (private industry, the nationalized sectors, and white-collar workers) instead of uniting them on a common program.

- It refused to declare a general strike on the pretext that one existed in fact, but in reality so as not to have to advance the only proper slogan for a general strike—a slogan of struggle for power.

- It negotiated in disregard of the workers' desires and accepted miserable agreements which the workers spontaneously rejected in as many seconds as the union leaders had spent hours working them out with the bosses and government.

- It never took the slightest initiative to mobilize the strikers, limiting itself either to keeping them bottled up in the plants or sending them home to twiddle their thumbs.

- It never stopped making war on and slandering the "ultra-leftists," tacitly encouraging physical violence against them as in the past, and at the same time, it never organized workers to defend themselves against reactionary bands and state repressive forces.

- It never raised the slogan of dissolution of the repressive forces (Gardes Mobiles, CRS) which were sent against the students and the workers.

- It betrayed the defense of "foreign" militants faced with repressive government dictates (the Cohn-Bendit affair), thus promoting its factional interests ahead of proletarian internationalism and at the expense of it.

- It never publicly denounced Mitterrand's maneuvers and never stopped chasing after the FGDS to get a "joint program" already outdistanced by the political events.

- It held an equivocal attitude on the referendum which de Gaulle decided to call at one point.

- It never sought to overturn de Gaulle and was the first to accept

his decision to hold legislative elections. Thus, it betrayed 10 million strikers in the quest for five million votes.

— It did not want to utilize a movement which was leading to socialism. Seeking a "new democracy" of a bourgeois character, it assured the maintenance of de Gaulle's regime.

This betrayal of the PCF leadership equalled and surpassed the oft denounced betrayals of the Social Democracy. If this leadership has not up until now acted in the manner that the Noskes and the Eberts acted against the German revolution of 1918-19, it is because the bourgeoisie has no need of it. But its conduct toward the "ultraleftists" leaves no doubt that it is ready to do so should the need arise.

VII. The organization of the working class during the strike

A few words must be added on the organization of the working class by the PCF leadership through the CGT apparatus. For a good many years the Stalinists have stifled workers democracy in the organizations they dominate, above all in the CGT. It was almost impossible for a worker to rise to the most modest post in a union local, in a national union, or even to the position of plant delegate—no matter how devoted or how active he might be—without the endorsement of the factory cell or the trade-union apparatus in his plant. Only those who had passed through this screening were eligible to be officially entrusted with the confidence of the workers, even at the lowest level. That is, while they were not necessarily members of the Communist Party, they were not to constitute an obstacle to the policy which it conducted through the intermediary of the CGT. Only rare exceptions could be noted in recent years: For example, some union activists held PSU cards. Furthermore, criticisms in union meetings could not go beyond a certain limit. In these conditions, the opportunities for activity open to critical elements were restricted if not nonexistent. There was never any question of getting a serious hearing in trade-union congresses, or being able to openly advocate a different line than that of the leadership. Known oppositionists were barely tolerated.

In the course of the movement, "strike committees" were designated in the factories. But for the great majority of workers, the concept of a "strike committee" was not clear, for the simple reason that the union leaderships never seriously explained it—because it was not in their interest to do so. They never explained to the workers that in a strike the leadership of the struggle must be *democratically elected by all the strikers whether or not they are union members*. This occurred only in rare exceptions, in scattered plants, since workers had not been alerted to this question. Generally, the union local leaders were baptized "strike committees" during the strike. The result? These "strike committees" continued to operate in the same way they did when they were the executive boards of the

union locals. They served therefore much more as transmission belts to bring the CGT's policy down to the workers than transmission belts for bringing the aspirations and desires of the rank-and-file workers up to the union tops. This, of course, helped to keep the union leaders in the dark about the aspirations of the class and to make them think that the workers would accept the agreements which they had negotiated on the Rue de Grenelle without any problem.

But this camouflaging of the union locals leadership as "strike committees" had another consequence which was really grave. These "strike committees" were bound together only by the union apparatus. If there had been real elected strike committees it is probable that we would have seen, at least in certain places, the tendency which has always manifested itself when there were elected strike committees—that is the tendency for these committees to federate on the local, then regional, and finally national levels. Then, instead of a bureaucratic halter and brake on the movement, there would be a network of democratically elected committees from the ground up which would tend to give birth to a much more representative leadership of the class in struggle, to a leadership subordinated much more to the strikers than to a trade-union apparatus or party whose special interests ran counter to the most profound natural tendencies of the movement and notably to the revolutionary tendency which was carrying it toward the conquest of power to create a socialist society.

VIII. The revolutionary vanguard

The revolutionary vanguard in May is generally conceded to have been the youth, youth who very largely escaped control of the traditional organizations and leaderships of the workers movement.

It was the student youth who, first of all began the fight at the university. New movements emerged, like the March 22 Movement at Nanterre. There were formations claiming to base themselves on Trotsky, Che Guevara, Mao Tse-tung. In UNEF, these line formations played a leading role or acted as the motor force, instigating the taking of positions, demonstrations, etc. There was no room for doubt about the relationship of the old leaderships of the workers movement to this student youth. Hardly a word was heard about the Social Democratic students. The Communist students, led by the political bureau, had over the preceding years expelled in successive purges all elements from the Communist Student Union (UEC) inspired by political orientations different from that of Waldeck Rochet—and they were the majority. It was these expelled members precisely who were in the leadership of the "grouplets."

Banned from the peaceful and spiritless demonstrations which sometimes moved from the Place de la Republique to the Place de la Bastille, and sometimes from the Place de la Bastille to the Place de la Republique, these "ultraleftists" turned up again in the May 1968 demonstrations at the head of tens of thousands of demonstrators.

And these were ardent, militant demonstrators not afraid to confront the repressive forces of the capitalist state.

In the student-occupied Sorbonne courtyard the UEC has its place — because the other groups respect workers democracy even for those who have trampled it underfoot for years. However, the authority and influence of the UEC, and through it of the PCF leadership, have been mortally damaged in the student milieu. It is not anticipating the future to say that the PCF leadership has little further chance in this milieu. Observations which it has been possible to make here and there indicate the UEC's recruitment in the most recent period has been among the most politically backward layers. This is only normal. Once a party has (capitalist) "statesmanship," as the editor of *Le Monde* described the PCF, the only ones who can turn toward it in such a period are those who still dream of leading a quiet life in the service of the state or the bosses — not those who dedicate themselves to the socialist revolution.

The university student youth were joined by the high-school youth. The participation of hundreds of thousands of 14- and 15-year-old young people in the May movement is a phenomenon absolutely unprecedented in history. The high-school movement originated in the course of actions in solidarity with the Vietnamese revolution. Some very young militants who sought to campaign for solidarity with the Vietnamese people in the high schools collided with the administration as well as many teachers attached to the old idea of the barracks-type school. In order to struggle against the regime in the high schools, these very young militants founded the high-school action committees (CAL). One of the leaders was expelled from the Lycee Condorcet,* and this touched off a protest demonstration of several hundred high-school students outside this lycee. This movement grew during the early months of 1968. On May 9, the CAL decided to call a high-school general strike for the following day. This strike was begun in a manner rather like factory strikes. The strike (the high-school students used the same term as the workers) began in the morning; the striking students went out into the streets to go to other high schools in order to bring them out on strike; street meetings were held. In the afternoon, a demonstration of close to 8,000 high-school students went from the Gobelins to the Place Denfert-Rochereau to join the university students and teachers' demonstration. This demonstration was to end with the night of the barricades in which a great number of high-school students participated. The strike movement extended to the technical high schools and all institutions of the same type. The CAL, democratically representing all of the strikers, initiated several street demonstrations together with UNEF and SNESup.

Politically, the active wing of the CAL shares the views of the university students; it is resolutely anticapitalist and internationalist. Some pressure from the teachers has made itself felt in the schools,

* The French lycees are on the order of the English "public schools" like Eton and Harrow. The Lycee Condorcet is one of the elite lycees, along with the Lycee Louis le Grand and the Lycee Henri IV. Expulsion from such a school could represent a serious threat to a student's future career. — Ed.

since the secondary-school teachers' union is in the hands of the Stalinists. But one can be confident that Stalinist influence will not make much headway with this section of youth either.

After May 3 the number of young workers demonstrating side by side with the students grew daily. This was also a revelation: The unions which held sway over the factory workers exercised only relative control over the youth in the factories.

In the months preceding May, on several occasions (Besancon, Caen, Le Mans, Rouen, etc.) there was a conspicuous combativity on the part of the youth in strikes; this could be particularly noted in confrontations which had already occurred in the streets. These were the advance signs of the explosion. These developments showed that the youth were exhibiting signs of a militancy and a combativity which they had not learned from their organizations. But it was still difficult to discern in these manifestations a break with the traditional leaderships and their policy. The youth were unable to assert their views against the union apparatuses because of the lack of workers democracy. It took May to reveal this break. And it came out into the open primarily because the students, by taking the lead with a different policy from the traditional leaderships, offered the young workers a pole of attraction; the young workers flocked to it en masse. Dissatisfied with the policy and methods of the traditional leaderships, they came in large numbers to the Sorbonne to get direction.

Thus, the working-class youth are also showing themselves more and more resistant to Stalinism. The CGT leadership rapidly comprehended the danger facing it. For several months, it had been preparing a "youth festival" for May 11 and 12. Two hours before it was to open it cancelled it on a phony pretext. In actuality, the CGT leaders wanted to forestall the contact which would have occurred between the youth they brought together and those who had come the evening before to fight on the barricades the night of Rue Gay-Lussac — and that was the real youth festival.

It was also the youth in most cases and notably at the Renault plants who took the initiative in the strikes and factory occupations. They did not wait for orders from the union, often violently shaking up the immobility of the trade-union organizations. During the strike, frictions multiplied between union apparatuses and young workers. An impressive picture can be drawn. The May 29 CGT demonstration was called largely to prevent the unions from being outflanked by young workers. At Renault this situation assumed important proportions.

It is necessary to go a bit more into the question of the "young hoodlums" and other youth belonging to the "gangs" in the working-class districts who for years have been a frequent subject of discussion in the press. Because they participated extremely combatively in the street battles, striking fear into the forces of repression, the most violent abuse was heaped on them from various quarters. During the events, the minister of the interior Fouchet, never sparing in his use of scare words, dared to use the word "scum" to blacken these youth. These young people have nothing in common with the

real scum, the riffraff who are also the best defenders of the bourgeois order. At the time of the Ben Barka affair they were on the best terms with the highest police officials, they often operated as a kind of auxiliary police service, and they mingled with secret police agents who gravitate around the highest spheres of the Fifth Republic. It is in the gangs de Gaulle is appealing to for "civic action" that you find the scum. This scum extends from the highest rung of society to the riffraff who protect the underworld. These supporters of the Fifth Republic are in the best tradition of Napoleon III's "December 10 Society."

The "young hoodlums" and other youths who were slandered by this rabble-rousing minister are nothing more than young workers whom the neocapitalist consumer society has reduced to more than precarious conditions of existence and employment. Lacking in vocational skills, the first to be thrown out of work by technological progress, without hope, harassed daily by a police force which considers repression the highest form of education, they have built up a ferocious hatred of the repressive forces. This was, if you will, a very elementary form of developing political opposition to capitalist society. With rare exceptions, no one has had a real dialogue with them. With an unflinching instinct they took the side of the students. Their interest was in taking their revenge for all the harassment the police had subjected them to. During the events, a radio reporter asked one of these young men what his motive was in taking part in the demonstrations. He may have expected a more or less awkward political answer. "I came to beat up cops," the youth told him. According to the press reports, very few cases of looting were noted during the struggle. This proves that these youth were not interested in appropriating this or that product of the consumer society they were deprived of, but were much more interested in attacking police stations and the stock exchange. In the days of fighting, these young people, like many others, underwent a political ripening which will have its effects in the future.

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With the exception of the student milieu where there were well-developed and politically well-defined organizations representing a minority of the students and with the exception of the CAL's beginning to spring up among the high-school students, everywhere else the youth had no organization of their own. In this situation, the only solution lay in the extensive improvisation that actually occurred. Whether the bureaucrats like it or not, this improvisation, giving full freedom to the development of different points of view, produced results far exceeding those which the bureaucrats obtained with all the modern means at their disposal. This was so because for the first time in a very long time the initiative of every individual was appealed to. No personality was repressed; everyone could express himself with full freedom. Not only could individual personalities express themselves without constraint but in these conditions they expanded daily.

I will not give a profile here of the youth or adult political groups

which were in the vanguard of the movement. The events provided an opportunity to test each of them, their men and their politics in confrontation with developments. This question will be dealt with in separate articles. What it is important to define here is the general framework so that what these groups did at different moments of the action can be understood and judged better.

In any case, there was no team or group in the movement with sufficient authority to impose its will unchallenged. At each stage discussions developed, even at the beginning of demonstrations (at Denfert-Rochereau for example) or even during demonstrations (the Gare de Lyon for example). In a general way, the results were far from bad. No serious mistakes were committed. Moments of uneasiness or uncertainty, like May 8, were quickly overcome. Things did not deteriorate until the last. By May 29 it was necessary to determine a strategy and a tactic capable of setting the movement on the road to the conquest of power. But the vanguard as constituted did not command the objective elements necessary for such an effort. This situation must be altered because the struggles tomorrow will be much more arduous and the question of leadership will become vital.

The vanguard, which was politically heterogeneous and within which only minorities were organized, had overall a high political level. It recognized that the movement's object was the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a society building socialism. It recognized that the policy of "peaceful and parliamentary roads to socialism" and of "peaceful coexistence" was a betrayal of socialism. It rejected all petty-bourgeois nationalism and expressed its internationalism in the most striking fashion. It had a strongly anti-bureaucratic consciousness and a ferocious determination to assure democracy in its ranks. It accepted the existence of different political groups as normal; it feared only, because of the Stalinist experience, control of the movement by any one of these groups.

On many occasions one saw this vanguard collectively reaching decisions which revealed a high degree of political maturity. But I would fall short of my responsibility if I did not say that in some cases a still inadequate capacity in the area of strategy and political tactics could be noted. If I speak of ultraleft tendencies in this movement, it is not to indulge those militants still influenced by the Stalinists. I have no reason to concede anything to the prejudices fostered by the Stalinists. However, we find in such ultraleft tendencies a manifestation which is common to all revolutionary youth groups in every period. These tendencies are heightened at the present time in reaction to the extreme reformism and betrayal of the PCF. I am profoundly convinced that once this rebel youth gains a revolutionary response from an appreciable part of the working class, it will have no difficulty in acquiring the strategic and tactical capacity indispensable for tomorrow's extremely arduous struggles.

IX. Tasks and perspectives

May 1968 was, let me repeat again, the first phase of the socialist revolution in France. The crisis which would have led to the taking of power in the space of a few days has given way to a period of great strikes in which state power is no longer an immediate objective. Another revolutionary wave will follow. It is impossible to say when, but it undoubtedly will come. The objective conditions (among others the situation of the French economy in the international economic context) will play an important role in touching it off.

Already the French capitalists complain bitterly about the concessions they were compelled to make to the workers. The French economy, they say, will not be able to meet international competition. This argument has no special validity for the workers whose interests are opposed to those of the capitalists. Furthermore, it is rather exaggerated because the capitalists in other countries will soon be forced to make concessions to those they exploit for fear they will follow the French example. The French economy's difficulties lie elsewhere. On the one hand, in spite of the process of concentration which it has been undergoing, concentration in many areas is still far from the level attained in other countries. The workers' only interest in this matter is to seek ways to prevent this concentration from being effected at their expense.

The French economy is also suffering from the policy of "grandeur" inflicted on it by de Gaulle. This policy commits the French economy to the execution of immoderate projects, some of which are dangerous and useless, like the "force de frappe" [France's nuclear striking force], others of which must be realized at prices higher than would result from a rational utilization of the international division of labor. De Gaulle and the men around him are for "independence" at any price, that is at the price of the greatest sacrifices by the workers. Will May give de Gaulle and his agents pause to reflect on this score? In any case, the workers will no longer submit to the sort of thing they have been experiencing for the last 10 years.

There is still one more point which must be stressed about the economy. Haven't we been told *ad nauseam* about de Gaulle's realistic financial policy in which the franc is solidly backed by gold? On this point as on all others this great mind has proved its bankruptcy.

It is worth spending a little extra time on the subjective conditions because the vanguard has the real possibility of altering these in a favorable direction. Many political and organizational problems are posed on widely differing levels. In particular, important political questions exist: It is impossible to raise the question of the government without answering the question of what programs an alternative government would have. Problems of organizational policy arise for the vanguard at the level of the large masses and their organizations, at the level of a very broad vanguard in the more specific realm of action, and at the level of a numerically smaller but highly political vanguard. I obviously make no pretense of giving definitive answers to these questions. My aim is to provide

the components which can serve as a basis for fruitful discussion. The events which have taken place are of such an importance, the richness of their lessons so great, the problems they pose so complex, that these questions cannot be resolved within a narrow circle.

* * *

Leaving aside the problems posed by the economic strikes coming in the wake of the general strike, the following problems are on the agenda for the future in the arena of the broad masses: a perspective leading to the socialist society; the preparation of the great future struggles and of a revolutionary leadership to lead them; defense of the elements of "dual power" resulting from the May movement; the problems of universities and of education, where the conflict between the government and the interested parties—which concerns all workers—remains irreconcilable.

Defense of the students and university teachers against the bourgeois government will inevitably assume multiple forms, not all of which can be foreseen. One can be certain that the government will not long tolerate what is going on at the Sorbonne, where there is a revolutionary center, a fortress of socialism and internationalism. In order to carry out this defense, the great masses of people must be made to understand its importance. A system of ever closer ties must be established between the students and the workers. The government is trying to establish a distinction between the "good" students who want to pursue their studies, and the others who think of nothing but agitation. Developing a link between the students and the workers is not a one-day affair; it is still one of the tasks which the vanguard must work at on a day-to-day basis and for which it must step up its efforts.

This is not a secondary problem. It is not surprising that the two mutually hostile forces which have an interest in maintaining the established order, the bourgeois state and the PCF leadership, express themselves in more or less identical terms about the revolutionary movements among the students. In this sector the revolutionary socialist vanguard is politically dominant in fact and offers a valuable support for all revolutionary militants no matter what tendency they belong to.

Failure to understand the Sorbonne's exceptional position today for the cause of world socialism would show an unpardonable blindness. New positions cannot be won if you are incapable of defending positions already conquered. The defense of the Sorbonne is the prime task of all revolutionaries at the present time.

(a) A transitional program

I have pointed out the basic causes which prevented the movement from making the decisive leap to take power, that is, in the first place, the betrayal of the traditional leaderships, notably of the PCF and the CGT, which the most decisive masses follow; and, in the second place, the absence of organized forces able to constitute an

alternative leadership in the eyes of the workers. This is not all. The militants who made up the revolutionary minority were handicapped by a considerable gap in their political arsenal—the lack of a transitional program.

What do I mean by that? From the moment the struggle began it was relatively easy to determine a program of the workers' essential immediate demands: All that was necessary for that was to listen to the workers. Moreover, it was easy to explain that these demands could only be guaranteed by a government representing the workers and that any government tied to the bourgeoisie would be a means by which the class enemy could gain time before setting out to reconquer the lost ground. Beyond this however, questions were also posed which the revolutionary vanguard did not answer adequately. Even our own organization, the PCI, whose program holds an answer to these questions, was deficient in this regard. Caught up in the whirlwind of the events, it primarily answered the immediate questions and did not make sufficient use of the political armament it has possessed for years.

The questions which were posed can be summed up briefly:

a) How was a workers government to be established?

b) Above and beyond the satisfaction of the workers' immediate demands, what would the program of such a government be, not only for the workers but for all the working masses of the country? A government must have a full program.

These questions will arise anew as the next revolutionary crises develop. They will be posed even more acutely, for the coming mobilizations will not start off from immediate demands alone with only these as their object. Already certain demands were raised in May which exceeded the limits of the workers' immediate demands.

The required program is what we have long called the transitional program; this term has been picked up by others but in a meaning we have rejected as false. To deal concretely with this question, let us start from the fact that in the course of the movement the CFDT advanced more general demands in connection with workers' participation in the management of the plants. The workers in fact do not seek merely an improvement in their immediate conditions. They do not want to be cogs in the economy like cogs in a machine, only maintained better than in the past. Nor do they want to remain the objects they are in the capitalist economy. The CGT leaders responded to these questions, in the words of Seguy, that self-management was "a vague formula" (May 10 at Renault). This was quite simply the response of a bureaucrat for whom all power in the union, the party, the plant, or the nation must be in the hands of an apparatus. The Stalinist system has been and remains his model.

But the epoch of this system—which moreover never had any justification from a Marxist point of view—is now over. It is impossible to run society, the economy, the schools, the workers organizations, etc. . . . unless the producers, the consumers, the par-

ticipants, and the membership are democratically involved in running them. It is the bosses and the bureaucrats who are proving increasingly superfluous.

The desire for structural changes is recognized even by de Gaulle. In his recent radio interview, he tried once again to offer the same tired old nostrum—collaboration between capital and labor—as an invention by which both capitalism and communism could be disposed of. This discovery is just about as old as the first clashes between capitalism and the workers movement. De Gaulle, however, chose to specify one point of what, according to him, such collaboration would be: there must be a leader in command in the plants. This point of view is identical to his conception of society. There must be a leader—de Gaulle himself. This time he has dubbed his notion "participation." We already got a long look in May at the kind of participation we will see in the coming period, the participation of the CRS and the Gardes Mobiles.

If the CFDT's demands in the area of plant management are examined, it can be said that they engendered ambiguity in the arguments of those defending them. For the leadership of this union federation and a large number of its activists, these demands by no means represented a challenge to the capitalist order. Their objective, in the minds of the leadership and these activists, was to remove certain aspects in present-day capitalism carried over from the 19th century and to carry out a certain number of reforms which would enable the capitalist system to function more effectively. For other militants, these demands were meant to bring about the substitution of a socialist society for capitalism. In other words, in the minds of their promoters, these demands were intended to lead to the integration of the workers and their organizations into a capitalist state renovated on the technocratic model.

However, in our conception, the transitional program is a body of general demands which bring the masses, as they mobilize behind them, into conflict with the bourgeois state, which lead them to creating the first organs of a workers state, to seize the government and begin building a socialist society.

A transitional program must be an anticapitalist program. And to be effective its internal logic must correspond to the logic of the mass movement. No organization can seek to establish it alone. Such a program can only be the product of confrontation in large assemblies in which not only workers, teachers, students, and intellectuals take part, as was outlined in the meetings in the Sorbonne and the universities, but also the representatives of all layers of the working population—housewives, soldiers, small businessmen, peasant-workers, etc. In regard to the universities, certain people associated the formula "student power" with that of "workers power," etc. No such "power" can be effective in the framework of a capitalist state. Self-management—in the universities, the plants, or elsewhere—is only an effective force in the context of a state freed from capitalism and in which workers democracy prevails.

For the immediate future, a confrontation between needs and

articulated demands can only take place in relatively restricted circles. However, in a period of revolutionary crisis the committees produced by the upsurge (workers committees, committees of housewives and small businessmen, peasants committees, soldiers committees, etc.) at once would be a place for formulating a real transitional program and could constitute a sort of national assembly of the working masses of the country. By federating on the local, regional, and national levels these committees would become the organs of the new government which would put this transitional program into effect. They would be the bodies on which such a government could be based and by which it could be controlled. A government thus constituted would really be a government of the toilers.

I have pointed out the confusion which occurred in the strike between bureaucratized trade-union bodies and strike committees. From what I have just said it clearly follows that committees and trade unions are not mutually exclusive. They are organs with different functions and different tasks. The workers will not cease to have immediate demands under the new regime, and the unions' essential task will be to assure that these demands are defended. Although I do not deny the unions the right to have an opinion on more general problems, the committees will be the political form encompassing the broadest masses. It is there that the masses will be able to educate themselves as to the general functioning of society (planning, education, justice, international policy, etc.) through a confrontation of ideological currents and opposing programs. It is there that the masses will be able to make decisions which they will execute. These committees will thus become organs of a government which involves the masses in its functioning in a continuous manner and not in the form of the "democratic" farce of elections every four or five years. These committees—they were called soviets in Russia in 1917—are the organs affording the greatest flexibility for drawing in the broadest masses; they are the only way to prepare for the withering away of the state, according to the concept of Marx and Lenin.

I make no pretense of setting forth a finished transitional program here. I will limit myself to bringing out a few points which, above and beyond the demands already proposed, I think must form the basis of such a program:

—A higher standard of living for the masses: reduction of the workweek, which is required by increased productivity and the need to eliminate unemployment.

—Nationalization without compensation of the factories and the key industries; the elimination of trade secrets; the establishment of a monopoly in foreign trade; the establishment of workers control to prepare the way for management of the plants by those who work in them.

—The establishment under democratic control by the masses of an economic plan to benefit the masses (housing, schools, roads,

hospitals, urban transportation, and free medicines, etc.) which would break with the bourgeois consumption model [that is, private instead of public consumption — Ed.].

— The simplification of administration, the institution of control over administration by people's committees.

— The dissolution of the repressive forces; the replacement of the professional army by a system of militias and the arming of the workers.

— Bold social legislation concerning young people and women.

— Nationalization of the large agricultural enterprises; the establishment of model state farms; the furthering of agricultural training; many-sided aid to agricultural producers or sellers cooperatives.

— Withdrawal from all military alliances; aid without political strings attached to peoples struggling for their independence and to peoples formerly colonized by French imperialism; solidarity with the revolutionary movements which are beginning to develop in Europe, with the perspective of creating a socialist federation of European countries.*

(b) Building a revolutionary leadership

Without a rationally applied transitional program it is impossible to mobilize masses of people. But how can this program be formulated by mass committees unless there exist at the different levels mentioned above organized groups to unite the masses, to pose the problems for them, to move them to action? I am going to examine the ways it seems possible to deal with the more general problem of building a revolutionary leadership in the plants, in the neighborhoods, and on a national scale.

In the arena of the large masses, the May movement unquestionably showed that, while the students were able to play a "detonator" role on several occasions, when the time came to take the leap of seizing power, a substitute leadership, or even the organized components of a substitute leadership, was lacking in the plants. I would stress the insistence with which the union leaders emphasized the opposition in the plants to "outside interference." They had asked nothing from the workers in regard to their relating to other forces; rather they speculated on the most backward layers' fear of being maneuvered. This was an echo from the Stalinists of the bourgeois refrain about "agitators" from God knows where, from abroad most often, etc., who were supposed to be stirring up the good French workers.

How can a substitute leadership, or the organized components of such a leadership, be created? If there had been real elected strike committees responsive to the will and aspirations of the ranks in a few medium-sized factories during the decisive hours, some of these committees, for example, could have taken the step of calling all the

*On these questions, see our publications: *Après de Gaulle? (After de Gaulle What?); The Death Agony of Capitalism, the Transitional Program, and Whither France?* by Leon Trotsky.

committees, or strong minorities in such committees, which agreed with them to a conference. This is not an invention on my part but a long-standing experience which has been renewed every time real strike committees have existed. Such committees, independent of the apparatuses, could have overcome the prejudice against "outside interference" and gained a hearing that the students could not.

The components of a substitute leadership for the revolutionary wave to come which, appealing and fighting for an independent policy in the factories, would offer the same sort of challenge to the CGT leadership's reformist line there as UNEF and SNESup did during the May mobilization, cannot be created overnight. These elements of an alternative leadership can only be formed by beginning a struggle against the reformist line in the workers movement right now. This is particularly necessary in the unions. Since these are the workers' permanent organizations, they regain their primary importance in normal periods, that is, in the intervals between acute struggle. What is primarily necessary in this regard is to achieve the conditions which would make it possible for the organized workers to choose between opposing positions: workers democracy in the unions, the factories, on demonstrations—in all the organizations it was eliminated from during the Stalinist years.

Here we face a crucial problem. And there is an obvious link, moreover, between the struggle against the authoritarianism of the Gaullist regime and the struggle against the omnipotence of the union leaderships. A reflection of this appeared at the time of the demonstration in the Charlety stadium, on the same day the workers rejected the Rue de Grenelle agreements. Shouts in conjunction were heard "De Gaulle Resign!" "Seguy Resign!"

This is not the place to go into detail on such a struggle inside the unions. It will be impossible to prevent a discussion of the line followed during the May mobilization in the CGT first of all as well as in all the mass organizations. Undoubtedly the CGT and PCF leaderships want to avoid such a debate. Their denunciation of "provocateurs" made this objective clear enough, one does not debate with provocateurs. However, this debate is inevitable because many trade-union activists have voiced fundamental criticisms of the line followed in May. Debate is also inevitable in the PCF. It is possible the leadership wants to "play out the fish" by keeping the membership busy with stepped-up activism, for example in the electoral campaign, and by touching the sensitive chord of the militants which vibrates every time the government attacks their party.

Already in May the intellectuals voiced their demands within the PCF. In the June 5 *l'Humanite* an official PCF declaration mentions the existence of a letter addressed to the party leadership by a number of intellectuals in the PCF. To find out what was in the letter, however, you had to consult the issue of *Le Monde* appearing the same day. What was discreetly described in the PCF's official statement as questioning "the application of the party's policy" was put this way in the intellectuals' letter:

"Their common revolt (of millions of workers; the youth in the

factories, the universities, and the high schools; and the great majority of the intellectuals) challenges, in the guise of the Gaullist regime, the very foundations of the present social system. By seeking from the outset to put a rein on this exceptional enthusiasm, the leadership cut the party off from a great force for socialist renewal. . . . At the Gare de Lyon . . . many Communists were there; but the party was not. This facilitated provocation by the government which was anxious to isolate and, in fact, crush the student movement. However, if it had not been for this movement . . . the factories would not have been occupied . . . and other opportunities would not have been opened up for struggle by the workers, whose role is decisive . . . We cannot shirk the debate on orientations, on the structure and future of the revolutionary movement which these events demand. A frank analysis of the reality, and bold political initiatives must at all costs enable the development of links with the new forces which have revealed themselves in the struggle for socialism and freedom."

As far as links with these new forces go, *l'Humanite*, speaking for the Stalinists who remain at the head of the PCF and the CGT, found no formula but denouncing them to the repressors, slandering the students who went to Flins as "provocateurs."

The leadership wants a "debate" in the customary fashion — that is a speedy condemnation by the party central committee, which is simply a body for recording the decisions of the political bureau. But this operation will not be so easy to carry out. Is it true that Garaudy agrees with these intellectuals? And why didn't *l'Humanite* mention that once these intellectuals had gotten a brush-off from the leadership in the June 1-3 meeting they occupied the headquarters of the Paris party federation of the Rue La Fayette for several hours? This is an example *l'Humanite* does not consider it desirable to make known . . .

The PCF worker-militants who hold positions in the trade-union movement and the factories have been confronted with responsibilities, questions which threaten their relations with their comrades in the shops that affect them on a day-to-day basis. A number of these Communist militants will not be able to remain indifferent to the fact that their party's policy toward the youth has gone bankrupt beyond all description. It is also known that Marchais's notorious formula, "the German, Cohn-Bendit," shocked many party members, who saw in it only a disagreeable lapse.

The elements of a major crisis have come together for the first time in the history of the PCF since its complete Stalinization: a leadership with impaired prestige; a policy repudiated by large strata of the workers; total bankruptcy in such an important area as the youth. The PCF and CGT leadership will certainly not give in without a fight. Indeed, its stubbornness in maintaining the party's regime and policy is at least as great as de Gaulle's in maintaining his authority in the state. One of the essential tasks which must be accomplished so that the next wave will not remain without a sub-

stitute leadership is to wage a struggle for discussion in the CGT without delay, and, for those who are members, in the PCF. This discussion must have as its starting point a balance sheet of the events of May 1968 and the policy pursued during this month. This struggle must be tied to the struggle for workers democracy so that the ranks will be able to choose between differing lines.

In the CGT this will clearly pose the question of the right of tendencies, that is the right of those who do not think like the leadership, to combine in order to defend nationally a common line in the various unions. At present this elementary democratic right is a monopoly and privilege of the leadership. How can anyone claim to fight for democracy in society and make a mockery of it in his own organization?

This battle for workers democracy—which clearly cannot be conducted abstractly, divorced from debate over the lines followed in May—is of crucial importance. It cannot be said with absolute certainty that the leadership's betrayal of the movement would have been averted if workers democracy had existed. However, a betrayal in this case could have only been carried out under difficult conditions for the leadership. It would not have been impossible for a sufficiently strong minority of the workers to have succeeded in carrying the movement in action beyond the point it attained by its own momentum.

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Now let us move on to the level of a relatively broad vanguard. The first problem which arises is that of the action committees which sprang up spontaneously in May. These committees match their name. They have no definite program, no well-articulated hierarchical structure on a national scale. In actuality, they are groups of activists who intervene daily in the neighborhoods or factories to achieve objectives through action which cannot be obtained by legal means, or could only be so obtained at the cost of great exertion, expense, and considerable time. The existence of such action committees is obviously dependent on favorable circumstances, more specifically on more or less embryonic forms of "dual power."

It is very important to maintain and strengthen these committees as long as circumstances permit by setting goals for them, whether defense of the existing elements of "dual power," or the creation of new ones, or self-defense against the attacks of the repressive forces and the "civic action" forces evoked by de Gaulle. It is in fact inevitable now that the bourgeoisie will resort to using both repressive forces of the state and extralegal forces in order to carry out a campaign of intimidation and repression. This would be true not only if de Gaulle stays in power but also if a "government of the left" were established. It must not be ascribed to chance that among the recent workers' demands the mass leaderships of all types, trade union or political, classical reformist or Stalinist, etc. . . . never advocated the slogan of dissolving the repressive forces (CRS, Gardes Mobiles) in May when the anger at, and even hatred of, these forces by the masses was at its peak. These leaderships have bourgeois

"statesmanship" and the bourgeois state cannot do without repressive forces.

It cannot be thought that a dead calm will reign in the interval between revolutionary crises. Now there are many incidents, of a greater or lesser import, of clashes between the social forces. In such conditions, a revolutionary policy must consist, among other things, in a sort of "political guerrilla warfare," a continual harassment of bourgeois society at the most diverse points. Such a struggle increases the importance of the action committees in particular. They must be able to keep the masses awake, to gain a better knowledge of their demands, and, thus, to prepare their future actions.

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More complex problems exist in regard to the vanguard proper. The factors in this situation are the following: a) groups and organizations formed long ago with fully developed programs; b) militants whom the events of recent years have driven out of the PCF (Vigier and Barjonet are among the most well-known and the most recent examples). One cannot predict what tendencies or formations will emerge in the PCF and sooner or later be expelled from it. The problem of revolutionary regroupment in various forms is inevitably on the order of the day. Those who belonged to the PCF and leave it or are expelled from it cannot act in isolation if they want to remain political activists. For the most part, however, they are not inclined to enter formations organized long ago and whose program was developed without their participation. In the coming period, while the old organizations will recruit, new organizations will also develop on rather generalized political bases. These organizations will provide their members with a milieu enabling them both to gain new political experience and to clarify their positions.

The members of the French section of the Fourth International think that the definitive solution of the processes at work in the vanguard, assuring the victory of the socialist revolution, will lead to the constitution of a mass party based on the revolutionary Marxist program they have defended for long years. However, they have never thought that such a party would be created solely by individual recruitment, by people just joining the organization as it is at the present time. Parties are not created and do not develop in such a way.

The most complex problem is that created by new groupings of militants, like the "Mouvement Revolutionnaire" [Revolutionary Movement]. This organization was the first to be formed and it will certainly not be the last of its type. Such groups are not comparable to the old formations, generally filled with men of fixed centrist positions whose political labels vary periodically. These new organizations will be formed primarily by militants whose political development is being advanced by the events. The attitude of the Trotskyists toward such formations must be to assist their development toward firm revolutionary Marxist positions. There can be no question of employing prefabricated formulas or more or less sharp stratagems in dealing with them. Taking account of the dynamic

character of such movements or formations, the Trotskyists' political attitude will be to support them insofar as they are correct and to criticize them where they are wrong.

Obviously, the Trotskyists want to encourage the development of the revolutionary vanguard toward Trotskyist political positions. The organizational question arises as an accessory to this. One of the obstacles on this path is the present division of the Trotskyist movement in France. With a view toward reunification of the Trotskyist movement, the PCI appealed during the May 1968 events to two other formations claiming to be Trotskyist to consider ways of altering this situation of disunity. There was no response from the OCI. This organization, along with its youth group, the FER, pursued an aberrant policy in May which cut them off from the more politically mature part of the vanguard. On the other hand, a step forward was accomplished with the founding of a coordinating committee of the PCI, the UC and the JCR. The Revolutionary Marxist Group later joined this committee.

X. The international repercussions of May 1968

It is impossible as I write this to give a complete picture of the international repercussions of the May events. Every day new signs are noted. Above and beyond the direct echoes, deeper consequences can be expected which will show up less immediately.

The French student revolt was not the earliest. Similar movements have developed in several countries in Europe and North America, born in the struggle against the Vietnam war, and advancing demands of a social nature. I am not forgetting the student movements in the so-called underdeveloped countries; great revolutionary thrusts have been developing there for a long time and the students have been associated with them. But the working masses of the West European countries in their great majority have been politically inert and the student movements have seemed to be going against the current in the general situation in these countries.

There is no doubt that the victorious Tet offensive gave considerable impetus to all the vanguard movements and to broad masses and encouraged all the enemies of capitalism and imperialism. Once Paris threw itself into the battle, the floodgates were thrown open everywhere. Paris regained the old honor of its revolutionary traditions. The student uprisings, followed by the gigantic working-class explosion, gave the signal for the start or the reinforcement of movements more or less everywhere. In Spain, first of all, the fall of Franco is on the order of the day; in Italy the students are throwing themselves furiously into repeated assaults; in West Germany—this American fortress in Europe—in England, Belgium, Sweden, etc. Everywhere the clarion call of revolution rang out and was heard. Everywhere the students defied the bourgeois order; everywhere they turned to the workers; everywhere the red flag was raised. University buildings tended to become free territories outside the bourgeois state's authority. In several countries and in Paris

the high-school students intervened in political and social life. The essential difference in France was that nowhere else has a working-class mobilization arisen to any degree comparable to that of May. The workers' reactions are slower in appearing, but it cannot be doubted that they will react. Several politicians, generally Social Democrats, have been the first to realize this. It could well happen here, Willy Brandt plaintively reflected; and he was not the only one saying such things.

In the underdeveloped countries, the consequences have not been long in making themselves felt. In Dakar, in Santiago de Chile, in Buenos Aires, in Rio de Janeiro, and in many other cities, the revolution has raised its head. Paris has given the best possible support to Vietnam as well as to socialist Cuba. We will soon see the consequences of May 1968 in North Africa, the Near East, in all of Asia, etc. . . . All the students from the colonial countries living in France and the other European countries during these events and who took part in them will transmit an added stimulus to the colonial revolution as well as a more complete Marxist education.

Once Paris and France had moved, it could be all the less doubted that the revolutionary movement would find a response in East Europe. In Czechoslovakia, the action of the students and the intellectuals had just made a decisive contribution to bringing about the fall of Novotny. Only a few days were required before the students in Belgrade formulated a body of demands which no Marxist could find anything to object to. They also threw up barricades and occupied the universities.

Reading the press often gives a deceptive impression of what is going on in a country. Is it not clear that the French press—both the bourgeois press and the press of the PCF—contributed to the self-intoxication both of the Gaullist government and the PCF leadership in regard to the situation in the country before May 1968? But what is to be said about the Soviet press in regard to the French events? *L'Humanite*, which always tail-ended the events, saw its lies printed in *Pravda* or *Izvestia* still a few days more behind the facts. We are living in the age of the transistor; and no censorship, no barrier, can limit the dissemination of the truth.

The Chinese government has sown an unexampled confusion in regard to the "cultural revolution" in the last year, and its crude accusations against the USSR have helped the Kremlin bureaucracy. This said, however, unlike Moscow, which did not hide its dismay at the idea that de Gaulle might vanish from the scene, the Chinese government organized immense demonstrations of solidarity with the May movement. The mobilization of hundreds of thousands of demonstrators—whatever the motives of the organizers—has an objective importance which no one can underestimate.

It will be forgotten by no one that in the Soviet Union, on the other hand, the government hid from the masses what was going on in France. This was not only owing to their indisputable desire

to conciliate de Gaulle. During these last years, the Soviet government has been pushing a very determined campaign against the intellectuals and the university youth in that country. Everyone recalls the Daniel-Sinyavsky trial, Brodsky, Ginzburg, the Litvinov-Bogoraz protests, etc. . . . the movements of writers, artists, and scholars to gain freedom of expression in their fields (art, literary creation, etc.) are, in many countries as in the Soviet Union, merely the precursors of antibureaucratic workers movements aimed at reestablishing soviet democracy. The hour—I am convinced—will not be long in striking when the students and the intellectuals of Leningrad, Moscow, Kharkov, and the other big Soviet cities will move massively into struggle against the bureaucratic government. They will struggle for soviet democracy and will clear the way for the intervention of the Soviet workers.

I cannot leave the workers states without saluting the Polish students—other forerunners of these battles—and more particularly, without saluting their leaders, comrades Modzelewsky and Kuron, who have again been imprisoned for their remarkable achievement of drawing up the first antibureaucratic socialist program in the present resurgence.

* * *

The rekindling of the European workers struggle is the May 1968 mobilization's most important contribution to the world revolution. At the end of the second world war, revolutionary movements in West Europe were quickly stifled because of the class collaboration of the Stalinists who lived up to the "Big Three" wartime division of Europe into "spheres of influence." These agreements guaranteed the maintenance of capitalism in West Europe. The victory of the Chinese revolution in 1949, at the end of the revolutionary period in Europe, kicked off the advance of the colonial revolution.

At the same time, the revolutionary socialist movement in West Europe suffered a considerable setback. Social Democratic or Stalinist reformism prevailed. Apathy and stagnation characterized the European workers movement to such an extent that some thinkers drew extremely pessimistic conclusions about the potentialities of the European proletariat and the proletariat in general. It cannot be doubted that the May mobilization of the French working class has broken the ground and set the workers throughout all of West Europe on the move. And this is true not only in the area of economic demands (properly speaking these struggles had never ceased but had remained within a narrowly reformist framework)—these struggles have been revived on a revolutionary level. The struggle for socialism is resurgent on the continent of its birth and where great revolutionary Marxist traditions exist, as May 1968 showed in France. As May 1968 showed also, these battles were renewed starting off from the heritage of the past, despite the fact that the Social Democratic or Stalinist leaderships have encased this heritage in a thick reformist shell for 20 to 30 years.

At its origin, the movement for socialism was limited for more than a half century, for understandable objective reasons, to the

economically developed countries of Europe. The victory of October 1917, although situated on the periphery of Europe, was the first great success in this struggle. It gave the starting signal for revolutionary struggles in the colonized countries. For a whole series of reasons which have been set forth *in extenso* by the Trotskyist movement, Stalinism, which had triumphed in the Soviet Union and in the Communist parties, caused numerous defeats (Germany 1933, Spain 1937, for example) and the miring down of socialist revolution in Europe. In May 1968, the European workers movement first got moving again. Although the pernicious influence which the old leaderships will continue to exercise for some time yet cannot be underestimated (we have just seen this in France), it is now unquestionable that everywhere in Europe, the youth—the young workers, students and high-school students—are no longer in thrall to these old leaderships and are seeking to provide a socialist solution for these struggles. This fact gives assurance that we can hold the greatest hopes for the European socialist revolution.

Moscow was long the center of the socialist revolution, long after the Kremlin policy had lost all revolutionary character. For some years now, Moscow has no longer held any authority or prestige in the eyes of numerous young revolutionary movements. China and Cuba together have had revolutionary aspirations. Now, the advance of the socialist revolution will continue on all fronts at once (the workers revolution in the advanced capitalist states; the colonial revolution; the antibureaucratic political revolution in the workers states). The dangers involved in polarization around a state leadership which has given priority to the specific national interests of certain privileged layers will disappear in the face of a more even advance of the world socialist revolution.

* * *

A few of the initial consequences of this less lopsided advance of the world socialist revolution were quickly discernible. The theoretical problems are no less important for the revolution and socialism. In past years, aside from the old, worn-out revisionist theories picked up by the Stalinists ("peaceful and parliamentary roads" to socialism, "peaceful coexistence"), many other theories have been advanced. Here are the most well known of these:

— The theories on neocapitalism which, it seems, was supposed to have resolved the fundamental contradictions of capitalism as Marx disclosed them.

— Manifold theories that the workers in the highly industrialized countries had been coopted into capitalist society and that as a result they were incapable of serving as the motor forces of the struggle for socialism, with this role falling to other social strata (Marcuse, Sweezy).

— The theory that the role of the peasants is decisive in the underdeveloped countries where the proletariat supposedly cannot play a revolutionary role (Fanon).

— The theory of revolution by an insurgent countryside encircling

the cities (Mao Tse-tung, Lin Piao).

— The theory of guerrilla warfare in the country, in which battles in the cities are considered impossible.

The reformist conceptions warmed over from Bernsteinism received a stinging refutation. The PCF leadership avoided drawing the conclusions of the fact that de Gaulle, who had been brought to power in 1958 by General Massu, went to visit him again 10 years later in order to maintain himself in power. Barricades did not turn out to be as old-fashioned as many claimed. It was proven yet again that reforms and demands are won, not after long years of narrow-minded reformism, but as a by-product of revolutionary struggle.

The theories that neocapitalism had definitively assured the stability of capitalism burst like soap bubbles. Neocapitalism, even in France, where there was a "strong state" the like of which existed nowhere else, was rotted within much more than anyone had suspected.

As for the new theories which did not renounce revolutionary socialism, they were all the products of the historical detours of the socialist revolution which I mentioned above. Each one of them based itself on one particular aspect of the situation: the fact that the students and intellectuals in the capitalist countries supported the colonial revolution, while the traditional workers movement proved derelict in this regard; powerful peasant uprisings in the colonial countries; the success of the guerrilla struggle in winning power in Cuba; the apathy of the workers movement in the European countries and its stifling bureaucratization. These experiences were over-generalized. The common denominator of all these theories was their claim that the proletariat in the central imperialist countries was incapable and impotent. May 1968 dealt a mortal blow to all these generalizations, without, however, putting in question the validity of certain special methods such as guerrilla warfare in specific cases. It is demonstrably risky, even if you think you are proceeding in a revolutionary manner, to make revisions of fundamental features of Marxist theory, such as the role of the proletariat, based on experiences involving only a few years and in circumstances as exceptional as the period of stagnation in the European workers movement.

The May 1968 movement endowed the revolutionary Marxism which the Fourth International has ceaselessly defended against the most inclement conditions with a new luster. It verified a whole series of lessons which for several decades had been relegated to the theoretical realm. The real-life experience of these lessons constituted the best school of Marxism we have had in a half century. The place of the general strike in the class struggle as a stage on the road to the winning of power; the creation of real mass committees in a revolutionary period; the emergence of dual power; the fact that the question of taking of power can be resolved in a very few crucial days and that such days come into existence in a revolutionary upheaval; the decisive role of the leadership in these days; the relationship between the masses and the vanguard—all these

questions came out of the books and became part of the flesh and blood of thousands upon thousands of militants who had never experienced anything like this in the past.

The mobilization of May 1968 also brought a series of enrichments which I can only mention here in this pamphlet. We witnessed in Paris a sort of overture to the great drama of the socialist revolution in the central imperialist countries. The themes of the great struggles to come were sounded. The relationship between the student and youth movements and those of the great working masses were illustrated in a striking manner. Methods of fighting in big cities were outlined. It is impossible, without smiling, to think of all the theories built on the idea that the masses were brutalized by the mass media. These theories were also one-sided, as we saw when all France lived through the barricade battles and the revolts in Paris for nights at a time. It was not brutalization but revolt that the communication media fostered.

The relationship among the various European movements, in particular among the various student movements, has underlined the need for a liaison and even coordinated activity on the international scale. As it develops, the European workers movement will be compelled to organize itself on a more international basis. The Common Market represented a defensive effort by the European capitalists in the attempt to hang on after two world wars. This miserable attempt to organize the productive forces within the capitalist system will be shattered by the exploding revolutionary struggles of the European working class, which will put the creation of a Socialist United States of Europe on its agenda.

And in regard to Europe and the Common Market, it is not unworthy of note that these champions of "European integration," the German, Italian, Belgian, Dutch, etc. reformist socialist party and trade-union leaderships did nothing—not a single appeal, not a single meeting, not a single solidarity demonstration—in support of the 10 million striking French workers. Moreover, among these striking workers were members of Force Ouvriere, the trade-union federation linked to them in this Common Market. For them, "European integration" means a share in the graft; it does not mean international solidarity of the European workers.

The necessity for a common international strategy for the struggles of the socialist revolution will make itself felt more and more imperiously. Thus, the question of the revolutionary international, which has been obscured and submerged for years by bureaucratic leaderships with special nationally limited interests, will arise with new vigor. Born in Europe more than a century ago, the mass revolutionary international will resurge more powerful than ever.

The French socialist revolution has begun; the European revolution has resumed its march forward. Fifty years after October 1917 worldwide victory looms on the horizon.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE MAY EVENTS

May 3—UNEF meeting at the Sorbonne against Fascist attacks and government repression. Police invade Sorbonne campus and make arrests. Violent incidents in Latin Quarter lasting six hours.

May 4—UNEF holds to its plans for demonstration Monday May 6. SNESup sets strike of university teachers for same date.

May 5—Extraordinary session of the Court of Summary Jurisdiction to sentence demonstrators arrested Friday.

May 6—Violent fighting in the morning and then from 2 p.m. in the afternoon to 1 a.m. the next morning on the Boulevard Saint-Michel and Saint-Germain. Grills around trees and paving stones are torn out to resist the repressive forces firing tear-gas grenades. Close to 600 students and police wounded. Student strikes spread to the provinces.

May 7—UNEF demonstration from 6:30 p.m. to midnight, going from the Place Denfert-Rochereau to the Place de l'Etoile on the Champs-Elysees, and then from the Place de l'Etoile to the Latin Quarter. More than 25,000 demonstrate. Violent fighting after 10 a.m., from Saint-Germain-des-Pres to Montparnasse, lasting until 3 a.m.

May 8—Debate in National Assembly. A hypocritical statement by the minister of education Peyrefitte. A meeting in the Halle aux Vins which breaks up without incident.

May 9—The Sorbonne is still closed despite the words of the minister of education. Impromptu meetings on the Boulevard Saint-Michel. The strike continues with three primary demands: release of all those imprisoned; halt to prosecutions; withdrawal of police forces from the university campuses. A meeting continues long into the evening at the Mutualite. The CGT and CFDT project a joint demonstration with UNEF for May 15.

May 10—A high-school student strike in Paris in the morning; a demonstration of high-school student strikers at 5 p.m. at the Gobelins to join UNEF and SNESup demonstration at the Place Denfert-Rochereau at 6:30. The united demonstration returns to Latin Quarter at 9:00. Barricades built, principally on the Rue Gay-Lussac. Violent fighting in the night from 2:15 to 6:00 in the morning. Almost 400 wounded.

May 11—CGT, CFDT, and FEN call a 24-hour general strike for Monday May 13. Pompidou speaks at 11:15 p.m., accepts the students' three primary demands.

May 13—General strike and monster demonstration in Paris. A minority continue the demonstration from the Place Denfert-Rochereau to the Champ de Mars and hold a meeting of about 20,000 persons. The students leave the Champ de Mars to occupy the Sorbonne.

May 14—New debate in National Assembly which fails to come to a conclusion. Late in afternoon, workers at Sud-Aviation in Nantes occupy their factory and shut the plant manager up in his office.

May 15—Renault plant in Cleon struck and occupied.

May 16—Renault strike extends to Flins. Speech by Pompidou.

May 17—Solid strike at Renault (Sanouville, Le Mans, Orleans, Billancourt). Strike at Berliet (Lyon), at Rhodiaceta-Vaise, Rhone-Poulenc (Saint-Fons). Air traffic halted.

May 18—The CGT in the person of Seguy formulates demands and announces that there will be no "all-out general strike." Student demonstration in front of and around the Renault plant. Trade-union officials refuse to let them enter the plant. Strike in SNCF, in the PTT, airplane construction, the Creusot and Rhone-Poulenc foundries (throughout France).

May 19—Strike at the RATP.

May 20—The strike extends to include millions of workers, the merchant marine, banks, insurance companies, gasoline industry (refining plants and distributors). Printers union authorizes publication of the daily papers.

May 21—New extension of the strike: textiles, the arsenals, construction, the big stores, the paper industry, Citroen, municipal services, entertainment. Declaration by Seguy: "empty formulas like self-management, reform of civilization, and other inventions . . ."

May 22—Beginning of peasant demonstrations (fraternization with the striking workers at Saint-Brieuc). Expulsion decree against Cohn-Bendit. The ORTF employees broadcast the debate in parliament. Extension of the strike to all agencies, to the Atomic Energy Commission, and to the social security administration. Temporary occupation of the CNPF and CGC. Trade unions declare their readiness to negotiate with the government.

May 23—The motion of censure is defeated. Resumption of student demonstrations on the Boulevard Saint-Germain and at the Palais-Bourbon with fighting until 4:00 a.m. The CGT breaks with UNEF. Declaration by the police unions: "Missions against striking workers would pose grave tests of conscience." The big Paris hotels, ORTF, and taxis strike.

May 24—Peasant demonstrations throughout France. Separate CGT demonstrations in Paris and meetings in the working-class neighborhoods. De Gaulle's speech announcing a referendum. A demonstration by the Action Committees at the Gare de Lyon which continues into a night of rioting in several neighborhoods in Paris. Five hundred wounded. Fighting in several cities, including Lyon and Nantes.

May 25—The strike encompasses 10 million workers. Opening of negotiations between the government and the unions at the Rue de Grenelle at 3:00 in the afternoon.

May 26—Negotiations continue.

May 27—An agreement is reached at 7:30 a.m. This agreement is immediately rejected by the workers at Renault (in the presence of Frachon and Seguy), Citroen, Rhodiaceta, Berliet, Sud-Aviation (Nantes), SNECMA, etc. Demonstration at Charlety (UNEF and SNESup), the Mendes-France maneuver comes out into the open. Mitterrand mentions Mendes-France in a press conference. The CGT organizes meetings in Paris.

May 28—Negotiations continue separately in many sectors.

May 29—De Gaulle leaves for Colombey. Scheduled to report to the Council of Ministers on the following day. The Mendes-France maneuver takes clearer form. For the first time, the CGT raises the question of a "political change opening the way for social progress and democracy." The PCF calls for "a people's and democratic unity government." CGT demonstration on the main streets of Paris. Statement by Mendes-France.

May 30—De Gaulle dissolves National Assembly and announces immediate elections. Pompidou remains premier and the government is to be reshuffled. De Gaulle appeals for "civic action." Gaullist demonstration on the Champs-Elysees.

May 31—Change in the ministerial lineup. During his absence from Paris, de Gaulle met with the army leaders. The CGT wants to reopen negotiations and declares its desire not to disrupt the elections of June 23 and 30. The PCF expresses its satisfaction on the holding of elections.

GLOSSARY

- CAL—Comites d'Action Lyceens (High-School Action Committees)
 CFDT—Confederation Francaise et Democratique du Travail (French Democratic Confederation of Labor—an independent union of Catholic origin)
 CGC—Confederation Generale des Cadres (General Confederation of Professionals)
 CGT—Confederation Generale du Travail (General Confederation of Labor—the Communist controlled union)
 CNPF—Conseil National du Patronnat Francais (French Employers Association)
 CVN—Comites Vietnam Nationaux (National Vietnam Committees)
 CP—Communist Party
 CRS—Compagnies Republicaines de Securite (Republican Security Companies—militarily armed and trained elite security troops)
 CSF—Compagnie Generale de Telegraphie sans Fil (General Electric Company)
 FEN—Federation de l'Education National (National Educational Federation)

- FER—Federation des Etudiants Revolutionnaires (Federation of Revolutionary Students—the youth group of the OCI)
- FGDS—Federation de la Gauche Democrate et Socialiste (Federation of the Democratic and Socialist Left—an alliance of right-wing Social Democrats and liberals)
- FO—Force Ouvriere (Work Force—a right-wing Social Democratic controlled union under American patronage)
- FTP—Franc-Tireurs et Partisans (Snipers and Partisans—the armed forces of the French resistance)
- Groupes Marxistes Revolutionnaires (Revolutionary Marxist Groups—the group associated with the former Fourth International leader Michel Pablo)
- JCR—Jeunesse Communiste Revolutionnaire (Revolutionary Communist Youth)
- OAS—Organisation de l'Armee Secrete (Secret Army Organization—the right-wing terror organization which arose in the last phase of the Algerian war)
- OCI—Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (the Internationalist Communist Organization—a sectarian organization claiming to be Trotskyist—allyed with the Socialist Labour League in England)
- ORTF—Office de Radio et Television Francais (Bureau of French Radio and Television—the state controlled communications network)
- PCF—Parti Communiste Francais (French Communist Party)
- PCI—Parti Communiste Internationaliste (Internationalist Communist party—the French section of the Fourth International)
- PCMLF—Parti Communiste Marxiste-Leniniste Francais (the Marxist-Leninist French Communist Party—one of the two pro-Chinese groups in France)
- PSU—Parti Socialiste Unifie (United Socialist Party—a centrist formation)
- PTT—Postes Telephones et Telegraphes (the telephone and telegraph system)
- RATP—Regie Autonome des Transports Parisiens (the Paris transportation company)
- SNESup—Syndicat National de l'Enseignement Superieur (National Union of University Teachers)
- SNCF—Societe Nationale des Chemins de Fer Francais (the French state railways)
- SNECMA—Societe Nationale d'Etude et de Construction de Moteurs d'Aviation (the state supported aviation construction and research company)
- Syndicat du Livre—the printers union
- UC—Union Communiste (Communist Union—a group claiming to be Trotskyist which publishes *Voix Ouvriere*)
- UEC—Union des Etudiants Communistes (Union of Communist Students—the Communist Party's student organization)
- UNEF—Union Nationale des Etudiants Francais (National Union of French Students)

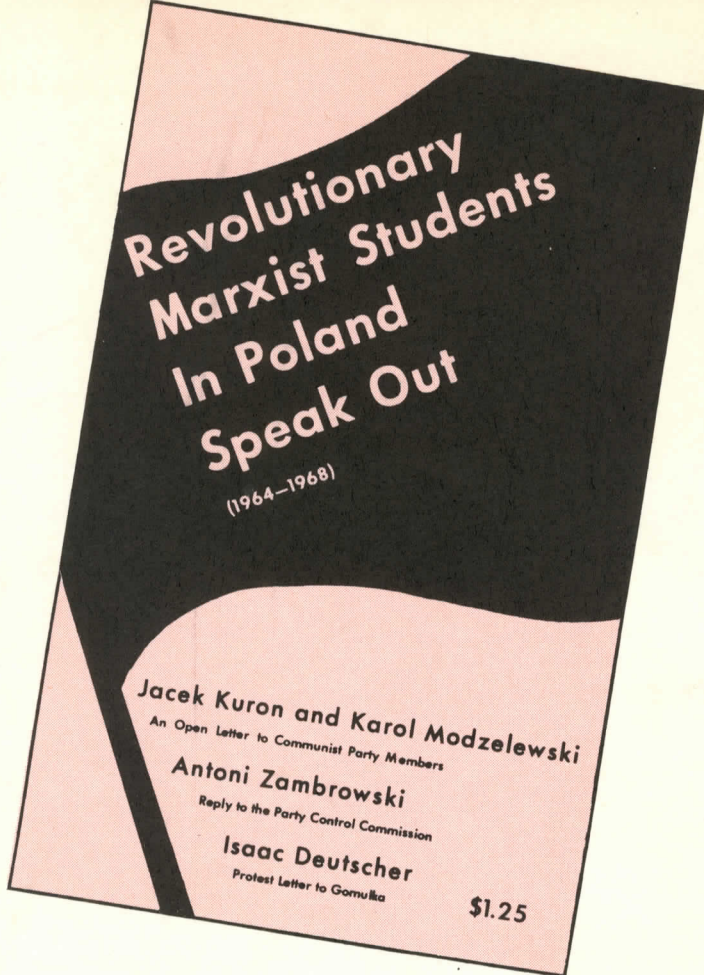
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