

## AN UNSOLVED THEORETICAL PROBLEM

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

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

The May Events produced a flowering of theories, from new working class interpretations<sup>1</sup> to a vigorous reassertion of the rightness of the traditional Marxist assimilation of the middle strata and the petty bourgeoisie. This latter position, which was that of the French Communist Party throughout most of its history, lies at the basis of the article by Claude Prévost translated above. Curiously enough, this was also the position of French Maoism during the May Events.

In a pamphlet written in response to A. Glucksmann's new working class argument, a Maoist group proposed that scientists, executives, and engineers all sell services individually to corporations which pay them out of revenue.<sup>2</sup> Hence the individual cadre is never a producer of surplus value, never a proletarian, but always a recipient of profit. His petty bourgeois class being is merely veiled by the fact that he receives a salary instead of owning an enterprise.

On the other side, Roger Garaudy, in an article which appears below, attacks the traditional view in La Democratie Nouvelle, a theoretical journal of the Communist Party.<sup>3</sup> Science, he argues, has become a direct productive force today. Hence the bearers of science are members of the "collective worker" of advanced capitalist society. The working class, thus extended, embraces a large part of the middle strata, from students to researchers, engineers and technicians, from office employees to executives "because the mechanization of administrative tasks and managerial functions increasingly effaces the frontier between the employee as a manipulator of computers, for example, and the laborer working under conditions of automation".

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

Marchais and his allies won, and Garaudy was later expelled from the Party for his criticism of the invasion of Czechoslovakia and its aftermath. But French communism was not, after all, unaffected by the events which had influenced Garaudy to place the middle strata alongside the proletariat in the

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, A. Glucksmann, Strategie et Revolution en France 1968 (Paris: Christian Bourgeois, 1968).

<sup>2</sup> Les etudiants, les cadres et la revolution, published by the Center Universitaire d'Etude et de Formation Marxiste-Leniniste.

<sup>3</sup> April-May 1968. (This journal no longer exists.)

"collective worker". Already on May 26, the Party published a leaflet designed to win the middle strata away from their Leftist leaders. It states:

The ENGINEERS, CADRES AND TECHNICIANS, threatened by de-qualification and unemployment and suffering from the ambiguity of their relations with management and the government, and the SCIENTISTS, who play such an important role today for the future of France, are tied to the most modern productive forces. They are thus in solidarity with the working class in its demand for an economy the rationality of which will no longer be subordinated to the profit of a few, but to the needs of all.<sup>4</sup>

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

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

Before these transformations emerged, the support for working class struggles by the middle strata and especially by intellectuals appeared as a rallying to the proletarian cause. Today there is no more question of rallying individually to the cause, but of an entente to be established between social strata having common interests and which can build a democratic future together.<sup>5</sup>

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

While the long overdue re-orientation of the Communist Party on these matters responded to certain realities, it contained another danger already noted in 1968 by the authors of the second article translated below.<sup>6</sup> They point out that the policy of alliance with the middle strata, whether they are regarded as petty bourgeois, as a new working class, or as something between the two tends to "legitimize and stand behind the whole present social structure, except for the capitalists' title to their factories". Indeed, the condition for alliance would seem to be a willingness to uphold and defend the privileges of the middle strata, just as working class parties have often promised to protect small property to win the support of its owners away from large property.

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<sup>4</sup> Le parti communiste francais s'adresse aux intellectuels, aux etudiants.

<sup>5</sup> Le capitalisme monopoliste d'etat (Paris: Editions Sociales), pp. 239-240.

<sup>6</sup> The authors belonged to the Comite Revolutionaire d'Initiative et de Reflexion, a group Vidal-Naquet tells us, which contained former partisans of the "Italian" theses in the French communist youth organization, but evidently, no longer associated with the Communist Party in May 1968. (cf. Journal de la commune etudiante, p. 639).

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

## THE REVOLT AND THE REVOLUTION

Roger Garaudy, Professor of the Faculty of Letters at Poitiers and member of the Political Directorate of the French Communist Party.

To understand the meaning of the events of these last three weeks involving the students, it is necessary to get rid of all that is simply anecdotal. Anecdotes about the movement and the often anarchic carryings-on which have accompanied it have mainly obscured and even distorted its real meaning.

One should, it seems to me, ask the following questions:

1st: What are the real objectives of the student movement?

2nd: What are the causes of these mass struggles?

3rd: What is their significance in terms of a class analysis, and what is their relationship to working class struggles?

4th: What is the present revolutionary role of the working class?

### I The Objectives of the Student Movement

An outstanding feature of the student movement has been the very rapid growth and development of student demands and the increase in scope during a period of less than three weeks of the objectives of their struggle, made apparent by the serious work of the student committees in the various faculties. Let us sketch in brief the direction of the movement.

A. In the beginning, their revolt was directed only against relatively superficial aspects of their situation which hardly touched upon the roots and principles of the system. Two of the issues at the beginning were:

- (a) relations between professors and students
- (b) the structure and management of the universities

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

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

The common struggle brought under question the present regime and its basic principles: the political regime of the Gaullists, and the socio-economic system of the society, which is no more than a monopolistic state capitalism.

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

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

In facing these two problems, the students began to understand, some more than others, that the relations of teachers and students in the modern universities, simply are a reflection of the relations of social dependence and of alienation typical of a capitalist society.

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

First of all the demand for autonomy of the universities which, contrary to what M. Pompidou has said in the Assembly, has been recommended and outlined in the Project for democratic educational reform by our Party (p. 139). This demand, made also in the resolution by the Deans condemning the absurd centralisation of the system, implies two distinct ideas:

1. That the elected organs at all levels: institutes, faculties, universities and national councils, have not only a consulting role but also decision making power. This demand is precisely along the lines of the policy as stated by our party, proposing to substitute everywhere the agents designated by the central power with elected representatives. Just as we have proposed that the powers of the prefect be transferred to the president of the general counsel, so professors and students have demanded to replace the rector - who is presently a sort of prefect - with a president elected by the university.

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

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

- determining the needs of the universities with respect to personnel, facilities and materials
- discussion of the programs and methods of teaching, and of the testing of students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

No one challenges the need or the worthwhile nature of a liaison between science, research and production, but it is remarkable that the business monopolies do not even think of this liaison in the same manner as we do. Let us say, in order to simplify, that regarding specifically the teaching of the human sciences in the faculty of letters (notably psychology and sociology), and in the faculty of law the teaching of political economy isolated from the human sciences and reduced to a question of management, the education aims less at ameliorating the forces of production, than at preserving the relations of production.

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

## II The Causes of a Mass Struggle

One can state them in a couple of words: the Fouchet Reform and the immediate worsening of all the contradictions in the university system brought on by its application.

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

- First of all because by introducing into higher education the short "Licence", the reform produced the same cleavage as exists in the secondary school system between the long and short cycles.
- In addition, because at all levels in all the disciplines, the reform has separated more than ever before one's technical training from reflection upon the ends and upon the sense of work and society.

From a practical point of view, the Fouchet Reform has worsened the employment crisis after the university, not only in one or another branch (as in psychology and sociology) but also in a more general sense: the prohibition against repeating a year, that is, eliminating a student after a failure at the first level, makes for additional obstacles especially for the students who work in addition to pursuing their studies, while already before the reform, 72% of the students never obtained their "Licence". Even for those who have succeeded in getting beyond these obstacles, designed to selectively eliminate, there is not often a guarantee of getting a job.

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

In such a movement, the gaining of awareness proceeds very quickly. The strike of May 13th signified a step in this direction. It made possible situating the action of the students within the perspective of working class struggles.

Three major ideas have, since then, become clear:

1. A consciousness of the intimate and profound relationship between this movement and the movement of the workers;
2. The idea that a true revolution, in our time, can not take place without the working class;
3. The idea that one can not have a socialist university in a capitalist world and that the solution of the university problem presupposes the solution of a much larger problem.

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

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

### III Significance of the Student Struggles and Their Relationship With the Struggles of the Working Class

This is a fundamental theoretical problem which determines the way in which the student struggles and those of the working class are related.

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

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

It would be false, however, to base on this alone, our judgment about the meaning of the student movement from a class-perspective. If for example we should say that because of their social origins, the students do not constitute a homogeneous social group and that the fact that a considerable number of them comes from the lower middle class confers necessarily upon them the political characteristics of the petty-bourgeoisie man with its hesitations, its oscillations, etc...we content ourselves with a mechanistic sociology which has nothing to do with marxist analysis, and the practical consequences of this theoretical error are disastrous. Without any doubt the social origins of the students have an effect upon their political behavior and weigh heavily upon them. But it is necessary to recall very clearly that this theoretical point of view was not Marx's at all, but it was rather Hippolyte Taine -who suggested this sort of predestination and this mechanistic relation to the milieu of origin.

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

Starting with these criteria, one can approach the question of the students, obviously in a very special way, by defining them in terms of their future



functions. From this point of view, a large number of students, especially those who are preparing for occupations related to the production process, who will become engineers, who will enter, as managers and executives, into the economic life and its management, those even who are oriented toward scientific research, will have, in our time, a particular place in the production process: we have said and repeated, with reason, that in our age, science has become a direct productive force.

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

1. Not only do they not own the means of production, unlike previous concepts of class and unlike the working class, as in the past – and like the workers – they do not possess the instruments of production.
2. But like the worker they too are producers, of surplus value; they are an integral part of the ‘collective worker’ about which Marx has spoken in Le Capital (1, 2, pp. 30 to 52).
3. And a third criterion, the subjective one of class consciousness. For many years now, following the development of the productive forces, and particularly following the application of cybernetics to production, organization and management, these strata of intellectuals find themselves in conditions favorable to attaining an increasing awareness of the fundamental contradictions as well as of the more recent contradictions of capitalism.

Clearly it is not only in anticipation of their future that the students experience these contradictions, that is in reflecting on the contradictory role that will be assigned them by the system when they will leave the university to become the managers of this system, the ends and meaning of which there is no question of discussing.

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

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

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

This objective basis explains that if, in the time of Marx and Engels (the

one a son from the lower middle class and the other of the upper middle class) taking up the cause of the working class for intellectuals was a purely individual phenomenon - since it had only a subjective basis: "an understanding of the course of history" as Marx wrote the Manifesto - taking up this cause today becomes a mass phenomenon since it rests on the objective basis of class relations linking the 'collective worker' (of which an increasing number of intellectuals are now an integral part) with the capitalist system.

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

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

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

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

The working class of France has defined its objectives as follows: demands for increased salaries, a decrease in working hours, active participation in the management of the Social Security, increased powers for the workers' committees, democratic decision making in the enterprises. The common denominator of all these demands, aiming at a democracy which will open the way to socialism, is the fundamental demand that each worker, instead of being a passive instrument in the hands of capital, become an active and creative participant, in directing the economy against the rule of the business monopolies, and in creating a political program which will substitute everywhere agents designated by the central power with elected representatives. Finally the working class demands, as the French Communist Party underlines, equal possibilities for all to have access to culture, a culture which is no longer in the service of monopolies, but a creation - which is conscious of the future.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We should say, without reserve, that this rapid change is a positive sign.

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

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

The first great challenge raised against capitalism in its very principles, has been that of Karl Marx and marxist parties.

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

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

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

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

It is not the same for socialist countries. What has made this difference

difficult to see is that socialism has been introduced into countries which are technically and economically backward; they have had to accomplish two tasks at the same time: institute socialism and overcome underdevelopment. The interaction between these two fundamental tasks has required, necessarily, giving priority for long stretches of time to the expansion of production, making it possible to overcome their lack of economic development. Accomplishing this in socialist countries has been a matter of life or death; and it is true that what has really been a means of staying alive might have given the impression of being an end in itself.

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

The first country where such errors have become clearly apparent is precisely the only one of the socialist states which had begun the construction of socialism in an already highly industrialized country: Czechoslovakia. Correcting these errors has been truly difficult, under the fire of implacable enemies who seek to exploit the situation, not in order to improve socialism, but in order to destroy it; but these corrections are underway and the success of this will provide a great example for the possibilities of socialism in a highly developed country.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

contradictions.

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

The definition of revolution given by Marcuse is therefore restricted and empirical. This is likewise the case with his definition of the working class.

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

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

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

Also because the mechanization of administrative work and of the functions of management blurs more and more the boundaries between an employee who has become a manipulator of calculating machines for example, and the worker, working under conditions of automation.

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

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

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

In the present stage of the development of productive forces, not only have the contradictions discovered by Marx, between the forces of production and the relations of production not been surmounted by capitalism, but new contradictions which did not exist in Marx's lifetime have appeared which confirm and aggravate those preceding them.

They contribute toward making more and more obvious and intolerable the irrationality of a system which requires of the worker the maximum initiative in his technical tasks and an unconditional obedience to private or collective ownership of the means of production.

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

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

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

## DOCUMENT

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

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

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

- to underline the theoretical crisis of the revolutionary workers' movement, we believe this crisis lies at the root of the ambiguities of the present political crisis with which the student revolt is struggling;
- to contribute to the discussion of the class nature of the educational system and of the roles of the middle' strata which it is supposed to train;
- to pose the problem of how these middle strata can eventually participate in the revolutionary struggle;
- to clear the slate of the false dilemma: critique of consumer society or support for workers' struggles;
- to deduce from this what present tasks seem most pressing to us.

## WHAT IS REVEALED BY THE STUDENT MOVEMENT

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

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

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

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

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

- the combination of the slogans of each of the groups which are now attempting to give the student movement a political program;

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

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

the role of teachers in the propagation of ideology,

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

He lies who pretends today--after the barricades--that the answer to these problems can be found in a political program that has been or is soon to be not yet formulated. He is lying and must accept a certain responsibility for the consequences; that of leaving the participants of May 10th with only one alternative--despair or cynicism on the one hand, conformity or retreat into sectarianism on the other.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

At the moment when the student movement is at a crossroads, on the morrow of an action that changed quite a few things, which, more specifically, opened up the possibility of facing difficult questions with some enthusiasm, we offer the results we obtained to criticism. May this criticism help us escape the risks inherent in the method which we chose (scientism, academism, and no doubt paternalism).

WHAT IS THE PLACE OF THE "MIDDLE STRATA" IN THE RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION

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

#### THE FAILURE OF THE TRADITIONAL MARXIST ANALYSIS

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

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

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

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

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

1) A steadily increasing number of people work in the sectors that were considered unproductive in Marx's terms: the management and distribution sectors, the educational system (there are about 10%

tradesmen, 12% employees, 10% middle level cadres.) We thus do not know how to place them in the relations of production: almost all of them are simply consumers of the surplus value produced by the proletariat.

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

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

- neither with the concept of complex work, complex work being a multiple



of simple work, taken as a reference point.

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

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

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

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

Marxism gives us another pertinent concept for the analysis of the middle strata which is no longer directly economic, that of the technical and the social division of labor. The first is the result of the technical requirements of production alone, the second expresses the political and ideological exigencies of the maintenance of the social structure and especially class relations. Positions in the technical division of labor are inscribed in the present state of the productive forces, whatever the social structures that are indispensable to the maintenance of production in its present state. On the contrary, the others (the foreman, the cop, the bourgeois ideologue) can be dispensed with in a different social structure. Thus the problematic of the indispensable and the useless reappears in a domain which does not coincide with that of production. These notions are perhaps simplistic: it is for instance not certain that at any given moment there exists a clearly determined technical distribution of tasks, but this notion is perhaps not a theoretical dead-end. It has never progressed for political reasons that we will examine later. Its most recent use in France was unfortunately: in 1964 Althusser explained in *Nouvelle Critique* that the professor-student relation was a purely technical one. The bureaucrats of theory, the academic Marxists, suppressed the problem for two years: they could not bury it.

#### CONSEQUENCES OF THEORETICAL FAILURE

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

The use of the notion of the people can be meaningful in China and in Vietnam where it can be defined as the union of workers and peasants (90% of the population according to Mao). In France it can only be a reformist potpourri. The French Communist Party has thus based its strategy on support for the demands of all the non-monopolistic strata; it is opposed to the reduction of wage differentials, saying that executives have special needs, especially for leisure! The engineer from Sceaux<sup>7</sup> needs nature more than the worker from Vitry...In other words it legitimizes and alibis the whole present social structure, except for the capitalists' title to their factories. By doing so it prepares at most for a State

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<sup>7</sup> A pleasant suburb of Paris. (Translator's note.)

capitalism with a new bourgeoisie, rebuilt on the basis of all the hierarchical advantages of power and knowledge. This new bourgeoisie would lack judicial status, but it would be a functional bourgeoisie nevertheless. That is why the doubts of the students about the content of the tasks they will later perform, their denunciation of the bourgeois University and their Critique of repressive roles, are so profoundly opposed to the entire electoralist strategy of the French Communist Party.

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

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

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

The recent movements in Czechoslovakia have been marked by the cadres' demands for higher wages. Besides demanding liberalization, they want to align their status with that of their Western homologues. L'Humanite (May, 1968) explains that the Czech economic crisis is caused by too narrow a salary scale: it was alright in 1948, but why should one now work harder if it does not result in an improvement in one's standard of living (other than general). Indeed, what progress in twenty years!

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

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

This appears clearly in the explanations of the Cultural Revolution provided by the U.J.C. (M.-L.) The bourgeoisie is no longer "defined" there by a property qualification, but by many different criteria: power, ideology, intellectual work. However these definitions are extremely loose and lack rigor. Sometimes allusions are made to the differentiating mechanisms which persist in socialist society. Sometimes the new bourgeoisie is presented as a historical survival of capitalism. These discussions are still lacking in any theoretical rigor. They have been forgotten by our Marxist-Leninist comrades when they speak of French realities: but it is clear that differentiating mechanisms (in particular the inequality of knowledge) are already at work in the capitalist countries just as they play a role in the socialist countries, and that there is no reason to speak of them for China and not for France. The M.-L. comrades have thus said nothing pertinent about the University for six months: their program of May 10 (50% workers' and peasants' sons in the University, alphabetization by the teachers, periodic manual work for the intellectuals) hastily plastered some ideas from the Cultural Revolution onto a wholly different situation, and gave them an absurd reformist aspect. These mistakes reveal the fact that today it is impossible to have an adequate revolutionary practice (in China as here) by simply defining oneself as a Marxist-Leninist, a guardian of a ready-made theory. Those who do not recognize the crisis of socialist thought today will end up in failure or remain mere groupuscules.

We are now going to try to present a critical interpretation of the role of the middle strata in the Economy. We will not emphasize

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

One must however recognize the following inevitable problem: what are the relations between the ideology of a class and its relations to the productive forces? What specific reasons does this or that class have to formulate objectives that correspond to a superior model? A correct answer to that question must first eliminate the Marxist schema that has led to the reformist idea: technical intellectuals are the revolutionary class because they are linked to the present development of the productive forces.

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

#### AN ATTEMPT AT AN ECONOMIC CRITIQUE: THE ROLE OF THE MIDDLE STRATA IN THE CAPITALIST RESPONSE TO THE THREAT OF OVERPRODUCTION

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

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

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

Crises have not been entirely overcome (cf. the present crisis) but have become very limited. It is not enough to say that monopolization, planning and the state sector facilitate anti-crisis mechanisms—it is still necessary to show

how supply has been limited and demand raised in the context of the immediate logic of capitalism.

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

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

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

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

Of course this analysis is schematic. But it suffices to look at some extreme professions to understand that this schema corresponds to a reality. For example, advertising is an important phenomenon: 1% of the G.N.P. in France, more than 2% in the U.S.A. (by comparison the French military budget represents 4% of the G.N.P.) This sort of activity is not productive, even in the marginalist sense of the term; at the sectorial level the advertising of Shell, Esso, Elf does not induce more consumption. If these firms did not advertise (by mutual agreement) they would sell just as much gasoline. But what would they do with their surplus?<sup>8</sup> Similarly for the pharmaceutical companies which every morning flood every doctor with two or three kilograms of advertising such as fancy journals which he does not even open. Advertising does not even play the role of orienting people toward innovations: it is most developed in the sectors of food, clothing, cars, which

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<sup>8</sup> This excessively schematic argument overlooks the problem of monopolistic competition. More complex mediations are required to prove the point. (Translator's note.)

are on the borderline of absolute over-production. It thus has as its sole economic function to maintain what the Keynesians call the propensity to consume, that is to say the system's capacity to function at the same level in the same way, to produce for production's sake.

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

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

It thus appears that capitalism has potential choices, which are not for that matter ever explicit, conscious ones. The "choice" is not made in terms of an economic objective, as is asserted, but for the sake of the political and ideological interests of the bourgeoisie. Thus capitalism could, a priori, especially with automation and technical progress, either reduce work time—which has the inconvenience of increasing the number of proletarians—or create new jobs for the "paid jobless." It also has degrees of freedom in the establishment of the salary scale (which varies rather widely from one country to another.) This testifies to the fact that the apologists lie when they constantly present capitalist growth as the only (and the best) path of development, when they present the content of this growth as determined by necessary economic laws. More broadly, those who refuse to pass on to the critique of the content of this growth provide justifications for the very substance of the system: economism, here as in China, is a type of reformism. It has deep roots even in the work of Marx: we know today how military investments, determined by political and ideological choices, orient scientific research and thereby also the content of technical innovations and the resulting development of the productive forces. Socialism cannot be defined today simply as the instrument of a higher development of the productive forces.

#### THE IDEOLOGICAL SYSTEM

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

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

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

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

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

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

with respect to the dominant ideology.

#### THE DOMINANT IDEOLOGY

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

At present, one of its essential elements is the notion of progress. It asserts:

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

Its realization is inscribed in the very development of the system.

-at the individual level: the idea of self-realization in consumption and in leisure.

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### THE VALUE SYSTEMS

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

For example, unskilled lab technicians, executing a narrowly specialized task completely separated from the "creative" work of the research boss: they receive a salary similar to that of a worker. How can this white collar proletariat stand the power of the boss and the spectacle of the substantial advantages which this latter draws from the manipulation of the image of scientific competence in the society (high salary, trips, multiple remunerations for consultation)? It accepts all this because it has interiorized the valorization, asserted by the dominant ideology, of scientific competence as expressed in diplomas. The lab technician himself then needs a system of compensations, and this role is played by the distinction which he draws between himself and the industrial proletariat. Unable really to live this distinction, he signifies it in an imaginary way by

his style of consumption and the belief in the superiority of non-manual labor.

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

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

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

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

#### DYSFUNCTIONINGS, ESCAPIST MECHANISMS, REINTEGRATION

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

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

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

#### Spontaneous Responses to Dysfunctionalings

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

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

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

system.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Agents of Repression and Integration

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

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

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



prestige in the eyes of the masses.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### AN EXAMPLE: THE STUDENTS

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

-While transmitting technical knowledge, it has a special role to play in the transmission of value systems. An initial source of contradictions emerges when the value system is inadequate to the task. The possibility of this contradiction is already a source of anxiety to the student who notices it, as is evident in the case of sociologists and psycho-sociologists. (They are educated in the values of the "purity" of research and the neutrality of science, and risk being employed in the service of the corporations of the capitalist regime.)

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

system which corresponds essentially to the traditional tasks to which higher education leads (research, teaching).

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

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

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

#### AND NOW WHAT ARE OUR TASKS?

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

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

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

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

Why should we deprive ourselves of the possibility of also using the specific contradictions of a stratum, which can be linked to more general contradictions,

In order to shake it to its foundations, eventually to divide it and to win a part of it to a revolutionary struggle? Such can be the case with the student milieu.

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

As for theoretical work, it will be the result of a political will; the social sciences will have to become the science of social formations. For the moment in any case, they are oriented in a way that presents the ideology of the system to a great extent, for example, at the level of the limitation-of fields of research and methodology (cf. fads, formalization, structuralism...).

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

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