

## WHICH SOCIAL FORCES ARE FOR CHANGE?\*

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Do you remember the debate about the two cultures on the Left? It was the big hit of the "dark years," from 1978-1980. On my Left (?), the valiant defenders of Marxism and the exploited, enemies of the "consensus" and "neo-social-democracy" and the "neo-petty-bourgeoisie," nostalgic defenders of the State and of "progress-all-the-same." On my Right (?), the deplorers of Statism and productivism, the champions of autonomy and the New Social Movements. CERES vs. the Rocardians, *Non!* vs. *Faire*, Motchane vs. Touraine, Jacobin culture vs. self-management culture.

Today the Left is in power. Which "culture" does it defend? To find out, you need only read the Plan, the first doctrinal statement of the new presidency. Right in the introduction, which sums up the legacy of the previous administration ("A Conservative Policy: Acknowledging a Blocked Situation"), we read: "This situation [inherited from Giscardianism] both reflects and reinforces the unfavorable attitude toward technical culture in our country....[The many transformations France has undergone in the past 30 years] have created conditions for a cultural metamorphosis whose first consequences are already in effect. A new culture, worldwide in its sphere of dissemination, is developing, based on knowledge and the contributions of science and technology; it calls forth means of acquiring and using knowledge; criteria for evaluating facts, events and works which have not yet been incorporated into our educational system. This culture is no longer knowledge, possession or usufruct of a legacy, be it collective or personal. It is more the ability for firms, groups and individuals to adapt and create, allowing them to place themselves, and to progress, within a permanent flow of information, knowledge and works from all horizons. All societies which have reached this stage of development must adapt their system of education and training, their structures of information, and even the image of their culture, to these new conditions. The absence or inadequacy of basic technical education at all levels and in all areas of schooling has deeply negative effects; among the most evident are underemployment; poorly adapted or obsolescent theoretical knowledge in all sectors of professional life; ignorance or lack of interest in industrial activities....In the field of education, information and culture, the broadening of supply has not generated the effects that one might have expected, such as an accentuation of social mobility, extension of the role of opinion, the development of creation. This unfinished transformation has led today to a turning backwards toward the past. This, in the long run, is the most serious threat weighing on French society."

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That ought to be clear enough. The culture which must be defended is one which (finally) adapts the ideology of France to what France has actually become in 30 years — from the Langevin-Wallon report to the Rueff-Armand report: “absolutely modern” as *Libération* editor Serge July would say, that is, technical and entrepreneurial.

But in what follows, we are told to beware: “In order to confront the crisis, France must search for new paths to recovery and progress. The failure of the previous administration demonstrates that a policy which allows the hopes of young people, the aspirations of women, and the employment security of older workers to be sacrificed is fundamentally contrary to the interests and expectations of the Nation. Social organization itself must undergo a renovation. The preceding governments were blind to the demand for justice and progress. They followed a liberal [i.e., ‘free enterprise’] and conservative policy. They failed to establish economic order. They allowed attitudes of withdrawal to develop. They let social divisions become intensified. France must turn its back on the forms of segregation which such policies encouraged. There can be no delay in bridging the gap between those who enjoy comfort, stable and easily attainable employment and a guaranteed future, and those who must suffer the risks and failures of modernization, pushed toward uncertain perspectives and precarious situations, or an assisted and dependent existence. The causes of this dangerous evolution must be eliminated, for they create — beneath the appearances of political democracy — an unacceptable cleavage between active and passive citizens.” In other words, no modernity without solidarity. As stated in the paragraph on labor-management negotiation: “It is a matter of equity. It is becoming an imperative for efficiency.”

In summary: the culture proposed by the Plan, drafted under the aegis of Rocardians, but carefully surveyed by other tendencies of the majority party, sees itself as modern, i.e., technical and industrial; considers this as merely a process of adapting to socio-economic reality, just as “the political majority has rejoined the sociological majority;” encourages the “interface” of dynamic individuals and groups; and refuses the “dual society,” seeking to assure the social dissemination of progress. In short, the new culture is *Rocardo-CERESiste*.

So? Could it be that three years of debate about “archaic” thinking on the Left masked a deeper agreement on basic issues? Is this accord the product of a viable “hegemonic bloc” in the Gramscian sense of the term? That is what needs to be examined.

#### *The Great Transformation*

There is no need to dwell here on the formidable transformation France underwent in the post-World-War period.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the war, agriculture still represented 45% of the working population. The French hegemonic

1. See, e.g., the works of André Granou, or my own: “Derrière les programmes, voir les forces” in *Les Temps Modernes*, December, 1976; “La double complexité de la crise,” June, 1980.

system, since the “holy alliance” against the nobility in 1789, renewed in June, 1848 and in Spring of 1971 against the proletariat, has fueled itself on the notion of Property, thus welding all the “small independent property holders,” farmers and “industrial and commercial entrepreneurs” to the *grande bourgeoisie*. The postwar period was characterized by the collapse of the peasantry, artisans and small shopkeepers (who have fallen from 31% to 14% from 1954 to 1978), while new layers of wage workers are on the rise. This phenomenon may be explained by three mechanisms:<sup>2</sup> 1) The concentration of capitalist production, accompanied by the “deconcentration” of capitalist functions, favoring the rise of wage-earning executives. While the exodus from the countryside has provided a growing mass of employees, and the growth of commercial employees has compensated for the fall of small traders, the growth of “liberal professions and upper executives” (the so-called “*bourgeois salariés*”) is more than matched by the collapse of the “industrial and commercial entrepreneur” category. 2) The capitalist division of labor, as it de-skills industrial work, causes a swelling in the ranks of technicians and engineers. Yet, this group remains limited: the former rise from 1% to 3.5% during the period from 1954 to 1975 while the latter moved from 0.4% to 1.2%. And 3) The rapid growth in the tasks of social regulation undertaken by the wage-earners of the public or para-public sector. In fact, professors, schoolteachers and so-called “middle-level medical and social managers” are the only groups which “explode” at annual rhythms of 8% after 1968, reaching 6.5% of the active population in 1975.

Thus while the mass of industrial workers has remained relatively stable (from 34% to 38% between 1954 and 1975) along with the handful of industrial entrepreneurs and liberal professionals (1% in 1954 as in 1975), we have witnessed a remarkable “substitution” of middle classes.

In the same period of time, the industrial working class itself has gone through considerable internal changes. Formerly structured according to a “skilled vs. manual labor” model, concentrated in the “Red belt” districts, organized by the Communist Party and the *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT), it has undergone a deep polarization of its technical composition, favoring the emergence of de-skilled “specialized” workers on one side and technicians on the other, with a transformation in its base of recruitment — more women, more rural people, more immigrants — which is not without consequences at the regional level. For example, in the rural townships of Lower Normandy, the majority of inhabitants are now wage workers.

Behind all this commotion: the “30 glorious years” (in J. Fourastié’s words) of intensive capital accumulation. Gone were the days of the timid, protectionist capitalism of the Third Republic. France opened up to Taylorism, “Fordism” and international competition. The spearhead of this industrialization effort was the industrial equipment sector, of which the Automobile was the finest blossom. This is the sector which pushes to an

2. See my “Le tertiaire, arborescence de l’accumulation capitaliste” in *Critiques de l’Economie Politique*, No. 12, July-September, 1980.

extreme the dissociation of collective know-how, polarized between "specialized laborers" (reduced to a role of manual execution) and methods bureaux. The development of this Fordism over a long period was possible only because it centered on mass production for mass consumption, which in turn implied the swelling of public service categories, i.e., the managers of the Welfare State.<sup>3</sup>

But which social group became the protagonist of this model of development? Not the old industrial and banking bourgeoisie, which had been crying out, only 10-20 years earlier: "We'd rather have Hitler than the Popular Front." No, instead we have a strange bloc of Gaullists, Marxists and Left Christians operating within the economic administration, and whose epic story has been told by Fourquet.<sup>4</sup> These future high functionaries, humiliated by the 1940 defeat, exasperated by a retrograde bourgeoisie, made up the only truly significant secret, underground party (in the Machiavellian sense of the term) of the 1950's and 60's: This party held state power only exceptionally (under Mendés-France and Chaban-Delmas), but in the bureaux of the upper administration, the Ministries of Finance, Planning, and the Department of Territorial Development (DATAR), it pursued its project with perseverance. The "Party of development"....Its very success within a fraction of the industrial bourgeoisie — a success which Gaullism was to assure at the level of economic policy — undermined the ideological base of the Right's hegemony. It may be said that Jérôme Monod, the party's faithful servant in DATAR, through his policy of de-skilling industrialization in the West of France, provided the fall of Jérôme Monod, Gaullist politician, in that Catholic region which had rallied to the Left by the municipal elections of 1976, helping to assure the overwhelming legislative victory of the Socialist Party in June, 1981.

What did the Right have to offer, after all? Once again, as always, the myth of property and the fear of "the sharers" ("*les partageux*"). After the cultural clash of May 1968, Premier Chaban-Delmas tried playing the "New Society" card, which he withdrew quickly when it failed to extinguish protest and calm workers' struggles, while provoking a defensive reflex on the part of the Right's chieftains: you can't win elections against those who are putting up your campaign posters. Pompidou took the risk of launching the "enrich yourself" theme, evoking the growth of durable consumer goods; but at the decisive moment, there was a return to the archaic strain of "They're going to take your little houses away" (this commodity being diametrically opposed to the logic of Fordism). One need only recall the windy oratory of Premier Pierre Messmer and the appeal to sacred old values by Culture Minister Maurice Druon.

3. On Fordism as work-process and mode of consumption, and the "monopolistic regulation" which accompanies it, see the works of Aglietta, Boyer, Coriat, Granou, and my book *Crise et inflation, pourquoi?* (Ed. Maspéro, 1979).

4. F. Fourquet, *Les Comptes de la puissance: histoire du Plan et de la comptabilité nationale*, (Editions Encres, 1981). As a complementary source, see P. Massé, "Autocritique des années 60, vues par un Commissaire au Plan" in *Supplément au Bulletin de l'IIHTP*, No. 1, 1981.

Yes, there was an industrial bourgeoisie in this period which was ready to play the card of the "Nippo-Swedish model:" the bourgeoisie which favored expansion (and read *Expansion* magazine), an industrial bourgeoisie which flirted with a certain modernist Left (J. Bidegain and C. Neuschwander, for example), and which felt oppressed by the archaism of the later Pompidou period. This bourgeoisie encountered that Left in associations such as *Echange et Projet*, under the aegis of "developmentalists" who were upset by the political failure of Chaban; some of the latter (such as Delors and Pisani) were to take the leap of joining the Socialist Party.

#### *The Giscardian Break*

At Pompidou's death in 1974, the Socialist Party was thus all ready to receive its legitimate legacy. With the industrialization process and the rural exodus largely completed, and the great wave of May 1968 having broken, and being well along the path to social-democratic co-optation, France seemed on the verge of aligning itself politically with Northern Europe, having already done so economically. And, indeed, by the legislative elections of 1973, the Left, with its Common Program, was knocking on the door of state power. It missed taking power by a hair in the presidential race of 1973. But miss it did, and the receding wave tossed up the foam of Giscardian "advanced liberalism." Seven years of Giscard's presidency and economic crisis were quite enough to squander the legacy promised to the social-democracy *à la française*.

Indeed, in 1974, in the heart of this specifically French hegemonic crisis, and at the beginning of the world crisis of Fordism, the financial bourgeoisie — i.e., the group which is free to place its money in rents, Russian loans, colonies or national industry — just barely held the line against the Left and delegated its power to its direct representative: Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.

We have here a double break with tradition. First, the financial bourgeoisie rarely occupies political power in its pure state. The summits of the state are generally occupied by the representatives of a class *alliance*, or hegemonic bloc, and not a basic class, even if it is an hegemonic *position*.<sup>5</sup> In fact, this can only happen in situations wherein the hegemonic bloc is already worn thin, while the new bloc is not yet mature or accepted, and in which there is no apparent "Bonapartist" solution.<sup>6</sup> This was the case with *Orléanisme* and with the Republic of the Dukes. The disadvantage of this last-recourse solution is that a class so microscopic cannot hold power alone for very long. We saw this in 1980-81 just as in 1848.

5. More generally, just as in chemistry one deals with molecules and not atoms, in political struggle one observes not classes but systems of class alliances (or blocs); a single class or class fraction may belong to two conflicting blocs, because of diverse linkages and attitudes that certain class fractions may present as a consequence of the complexity of their concrete conditions of existence and the manner in which they perceive these.

6. Correlatively to note 5, Bonapartism should not be conceived as an autonomization of political power in a situation of equilibrium between two classes, but rather in a situation of mutation between two hegemonic blocs. In this sense, Gaullism was Bonapartism.

The second break with tradition: Giscard d'Estaing did not belong to the "Resistantist" Arc; he could only claim to lead a very tiny group, the Independent Republicans, which was the product of a split from the old party of the traditional Right, the *Centre National des Indépendants et Paysans* (CNIP). This small contraption, (whose main claim to fame will have been that for 10 years running, from 1968-1978, it provided the Right with its Ministers of the Interior, or "top cop"), along with vestiges of the post-war Christian-Democratic M.R.P., made up the Union for French Democracy (UDF), Giscard's presidential coalition.

Giscard, although trained in the entourage of the economic administration and familiar with the credo of the developmentalists, did not share their beliefs. His Orleanist and "Vichyist" character<sup>7</sup> were not long in coming to the surface. In *Les Comptes de la puissance*, despite the brief presented by his advocate, Jean Sérisé, Giscard appears in the role of traitor. Let us recall, just to be clear, that the result of the 1974 election was not decided in the protected atmosphere of a seminar of the financial bourgeoisie meeting in a castle in the Yvelines. If Giscard beat Chaban-Delmas in the first round of the presidential elections and contained Mitterrand in the second, it was because, in spite of everything, he enjoyed a certain modernist image ("Change without risk") which he managed to retain for several months.

Let us pass over the brief episode of Jacques Chirac's Premiership (1974-1976) and the defeat of the Left in the legislative elections of 1978<sup>8</sup> so as to move directly to the government led by Raymond Barre, which expressed the president's true nature. Four years of Barrism brought about a complete transformation of the economic-political philosophy of the grande bourgeoisie. In confronting the crisis, the upper bourgeoisie (financial and industrial) and the upper administration made a choice which was to weigh heavily in the legacy transmitted to Mitterrand's presidency.<sup>9</sup> They abandoned the dream of a well-controlled, nationally-centered development of the French economic apparatus, opting instead for a new strategy of international free-market liberalism. Good-bye to the logic of decision between French investment and French consumption. France committed itself to what Stoffaës called a "dual society" path:<sup>10</sup> a mass of unemployed or insecure workers and small and middle-sized sub-contracting firms become pawns to a modern competitive sector moving toward multinationalization. The combined policy of the undervalued franc (which dissolved the territorial industrial base in favor of investment abroad) and austerity (which allowed for

7. The similarities between Giscardianism and Vichyism, often pointed out, are mentioned here only to stress that a certain technocratic modernism (see Paxton's book on Vichy) can very well fit in with a reactionary civil and political legislation, an abandonment of national independence, a relation to the masses based on elitism and paternalism, etc. From this standpoint, and thus via certain aspects of developmentalism, there is a continuity within the Vichyite modernist Right from De Gaulle to Giscard, despite the reversals explained here.

8. See my "La double complexité" *op. cit.*

9. This diagnosis is based on a serious economic study, summed up in my article "Redéploiement industriel: le legs du libéralisme," in *Le Débat* No. 16, November, 1981.

10. See C. Stoffaës and J. Amado, "Vers une socio-économie duale?" *Francaise*, 1980.

competition on the world market rather than competition by quality) reflected this option. The results were not long in coming: the internationalization of the French productive apparatus, already well along the way under Pompidou's presidency, was brutally accelerated. France quickly lost control over the production of its own means of production: more than 50% of its machines were purchased abroad, and the machine-tool sector was nearly annihilated. As a result, any succeeding government, whatever its political color, was condemned to subordinate its social policy to external constraints.

This collapse of the economic basis for a modernist social-democratic compromise was accompanied by another, relatively independent development: the erosion of this policy's ideological prestige. The (very relative) decline of the myth of the Welfare State is due to internal causes within the Left itself — a fusion of the Maoist and free-enterprise critiques of Soviet social-fascism, along with a questioning of statism and productivism by the social movements influenced by May 1968, etc. The equation "technical progress equals economic progress equals social progress equals the program of the state," shared by the Left of the 50's and 60's and the developmentalist party, has flown to pieces. Talented ideologues, situated along a wide spectrum from Raymond Aron to *Libération* and centered in the review *Esprit*, are attempting to forge a new synthesis between the needs of the modernization of free-enterprise capitalism and the libertarian aspirations which have been fermenting in the depths of society.

To be sure, this ideology was never to become that of Giscardian government, and even less that of a Giscard-Rocard alliance. It might have happened, but it did not — somewhat like in 1914, when the center-right and the center-left were irremediably split over the question of religion. And yet it seemed so simple. All you had to do was offer the masses a bit of participation in "quality-of-life" decisions in exchange for austerity at the quantitative level. All you had to do was farm out the management of local affairs to the new service-based petty-bourgeoisie while the grande bourgeoisie reserved for itself the worldwide domain in the Trilateral framework — with the national state, that barbaric relic, falling through the trap-door. I myself had outlined this hypothesis, which the review of the CERES, *Non!*, and in particular J.P. Garnier, were to present as an already-accomplished model.<sup>11</sup> But it was not to be. There was a reason of a general order for this: there is no other institution of sovereignty than the national state. Even if the hegemonic system can be modulated on differentiated regional frameworks, and even if the world-economy is structured according to "camps of nations" which guarantee a world order and struggle to impose it, the class struggle still plays itself out, and the institutional compromises are still negotiated at the nation-state level.

11. This interpretation is "paranoid" in the sense that it boils down to interpreting "everything that moves" outside the traditional workers' movement as a plot by the Trilateral Commission. I attempted to react against this interpretation while acknowledging certain truthful aspects of it in two articles which complement "La double complexité...": "L'Absurde polarisation" in *Le Monde diplomatique*, November 1980 and "Choisir sa gauche" in *Le Débat* No. 9, 1981.

Next, there is a reason of a particular order: during a period of redeployment, the local level cannot be uncoupled from the global level. The struggles in the Lorraine, at Plogoff, the sectoral workers' and farmers' struggles collided head-on with the logic of redeployment and called forth the state's repressive intervention. Under these conditions, the social movements could not be counted on to reform the existing institutional order without questioning its structural stability: the "social" was nothing more than a loose heap of corporatism which paralyzed the free-enterprise liberalism of the economy, and which the state had to put down. The situation was one in which the economic logic of a limited group, the multinational (*mondialiste*) bourgeoisie had nothing, but nothing, to propose to other layers of society.

The Giscard-Barre duo launched into the heresy (for all schools of political science theory combined) of governing a state in the literally corporate interests of a single class fraction, without conceding anything, even verbally, to its network of allies and supporters. The year 1980 saw this heresy become a paradox: the government united against itself — teachers, judges, lawyers, executives, fishermen, small traders, farmers, employees, workers — in short, everyone, from exploited classes to subordinate agents of domination. One still wonders how it was possible to believe, in the fall of that year, that Giscard would win the elections.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the only ideology which remained for the regime to adopt was that of Law and Order, i.e., the scarecrow of insecurity. Only fascist regimes can consolidate themselves with such an appeal, and the "soft Vichyism" of Giscard was not fascism. For one thing, the social material of fascism, including a serious working-class challenge to state power, did not exist. As for the ultra-modernist appeal to the trade-winds of international competition, mobility, *mondialisme*, etc., this ideology for rising young wolves could appeal only to a limited group (business executives and the upper state administration, by now purged of its nationalist developmentalists).

The sociologists of the HAVAS publicity agency (who are to class analysis what landscape painters are to geology) had in fact detected the coming collapse of this "look," which had replaced the rural "look" during the 1960-1974 period, and the rapid emergence of the "re-centered" group. The world crisis of Fordism had nothing to offer but blood, sweat and tears. The new petty bourgeoisie wanted to breathe a little. Perhaps not even Rocard would have made a successful presidential candidate.

#### *Has the Ship of Social-Democracy at Last Arrived?*

Mitterrand won a handy victory. Just as a tectonic pressure which has been contained too long unleashes an earthquake once a certain degree of tension is reached, the breach opened in the presidential legitimacy of the Right in May, 1981 had, by June, turned into a Socialist Party landslide in the

12. In that gloomy era, José Staco asked, in issue No. 25 of *Partis pris*: How is it possible to continue to lead in the opinion polls while attacking all the categories of society at once? He did not hazard an answer. In No. 22 (September, 1980), I compared the situation to the *ancien régime* just "before the flood," while nonetheless taking seriously the polls favorable to Giscard d'Estaing.

parliamentary elections. At last, the French people dared to wish for the change for which they were ripe.<sup>13</sup> And yet.....can it really be said that it is never too late to do good?

In the opposition, the Socialist Party had stored up all the aspirations of the new service layers as well as those of the workers. The Communist Party, embodying a traditional working class whose ranks were eroded by the capitalist reorganization of labor, having vainly tried to win away these new layers, retreated to its sociological bastion, at the risk of reproducing the worst faults attributed to this constituency: reference to the social-fascist countries, strains of *Doriotiste* rhetoric against the immigrants, and even crimes against the unity of the class, as attested by the racist incidents of Vitry and Montigny. This tactic was a failure, and the latent erosion of the party's electoral strength changed overnight into an historical *débâcle*. As for the Right, which was holding on by sheer inertia, it had strictly nothing left to say (Jacques Chirac having prudently hidden away the Reaganism which he had borrowed for the campaign, but whose fortunes in America were rapidly turning it into an anti-model).

The path was thus free. Better still, all routes appeared open. Mitterrand, a prudent and clever politician, took care to occupy all the spaces of representation: that of the new social layers (as attested by the "Other Path" poster in which he is shown flanked by waxen-faced experts — no fools, they!) and that of Old France (as is seen in the quasi-*Pétainiste* poster set against the background of a Roman church, with a slogan "Calm Strength"). It was thus admissible to seek support from the new layers, but only insofar as they wished to rediscover their roots, to "re-center" themselves. Because, in any event, the marginals who would have been willing to vote for the comic showman Coluche had no choice but to vote Mitterrand. They were granted a rock concert at Place de la République and the "peace of the brave" in the Larzac and Plogoff struggles.

Mitterrand's victory is thus the return to the necessity of a national-popular cultural hegemony, which the post-victory ceremony at the Panthéon rooted in a socialist, "Resistentalist" and anticolonialist humanism. Victor Hugo, whom Giscard had assassinated by sending the Royal Army against the fishermen, was brought back to life. Aside from which, Mitterrand writes like an heir to French high culture, whereas Giscard writes like an overeager polytechnic student.

Mitterrand's victory was thus a purging of the anti-liberty aberrations so foreign to the great tradition of the French Revolution, and which Pompidouism and Giscardism had allowed to accumulate. The death penalty was abolished, along with the State Security Court, the so-called "Security and Liberty" Law, and the military tribunals; gestures were made to the immigrants, the refugees, etc.

But Mitterrand's victory was above all the forceful return of the develop-

13. As J. Jaffré shows, it was not merely a demobilization of the electorate of the Right — see "France de gauche, vote de gauche" *Pauvoirs*, No. 20, 1982.

mentalists, who had been marginalized by Giscard d'Estaing. Symbolically enough, on the very day when Giscard attended the Circus of the Porte de Pantin with actors Mireille Mathieu and Alain Delon, the candidate Mitterrand retired for a studious Sunday with the remnants of the great era of the Plan and National Accounts, under the auspices of Pierre Mendès-France.

And in fact, contrary to all expectations, the new government gave birth, without delay, to a law nationalizing several of the main industrial and financial groups in their entirety and a "Keynesian" budget aiming at stimulating the economy through deficit public finance, with state expenditure being dedicated to a rise in social transfer payments and a great leap forward in research and development.

If we add to this picture that the very first major reform of the presidency was the decentralization law which endows local communities with an executive power — for the first time since Bonaparte did away with the communalist spirit of the 1793 constitution — then we see a certain logic in bud. Rigorously expounded in the Interim Plan, this logic may be summed up as follows: 1) Return, under state guidance, to a national-centered Fordism, with gains in productivity being shared out, this time, between accumulation and the shortening of the work-week. And 2) Re-adapting the institutional framework so as to promote the broad access of new middle layers to the management of local affairs, thus giving material substance at last to a modernist hegemonic bloc.

Is this not, after all, purely and simply the materialization of what might have occurred as early as 1973 — in short, what Chaban wished to do — in an economic conjuncture which is certainly less rosy than before, but also, politically far freer of obstacles? That is, there are no more ultra-leftists (*gauchistes*) to worry about, while the working-class aristocracy and bureaucracy represented by the Communist Party are forced to dilute their ambitions. Is this not the suitable synthesis between the "two cultures" of the Left on the common ground of modernism? For Chevènement and the industrialists, the Jacobin control over economic and technological development; and for the Rocardians, decentralization and the so-called "socialism of responsibility." Naturally, a moderate fraction of the Socialist Party — the *Nouvel Observateur* current, for example — will judge that things are too Jacobin, and that the law of the market is violated too openly. On the other hand, there are still people who will fear that an excess of decentralization may engender a form of "laissez-faire" harmful to the national community, by doing away with the safeguards against the small-village spirit.<sup>14</sup> But, on

14. These are the words of J.P. Garnier, an editor of the CERES review, in *Metropolis* No. 51. That issue, entitled "Le local, le central et le capital," is devoted to proving the thesis that the new government's project is very simply the same one attributed to Giscard for the past seven years, but which, for obscure reasons, he had not put into practice, i.e., the short-circuiting of the "national" between the "local" (where social policy and hegemony would be assured) and the "global" (where the macro-economy would be taken care of). Aside from the fact that I believe this short-circuiting to be as impossible now as ever, it seems to go against the project of all Socialist Party tendencies.

the whole, and as might have been expected, the "absurd polarization" is a thing of the past. It was Chevènement and Delors together who recommended the "pause" in reforms in Fall, 1981 (before the truly social reforms had even begun); while Michel Rocard, assigned to the Plan, feels the soul of a planner swelling up within him.

So much the better. The true, the only real polarization has come back to the surface: the polarization between the masses of workers and the social movements on one side, and reaction on the other, with the latter playing on old corporatist reflexes in the aim of building a mass base. Between these two forces, with a world crisis lurking above, what are the chances for a social-democratic stabilization?

#### *Capital has Quit the Rendez-vous*

The economic-social policy in the making has a two-fold inspiration: liberal Keynesian and state-directivist. The 1982 budget corresponds to the first inspiration. The idea is to recreate the virtuous cycle of Fordist growth. To do so, one must stimulate the purchasing power of the popular classes without weighing too heavily on enterprises, so as to stimulate investment as well. Presumably, as the enterprises see their profits and potential markets grow, they will not fail to invest, modernize and create jobs. Since the world market — whose expansion brought French growth in its wake after 1968 — is stagnant, one cannot expect miracles here. Productivity gains on the order of 3-4% (5-6 a few years ago) allow for a shortening of the work-week, but exclusively within the framework of a strict control of the purchasing power of the average annual wage (with compression of hierarchy); the only possible rises in purchasing power would come from the growth of social transfer payments (whose financing implies an attack — fiscal, in particular — on the wealthier layers).

Let us note from the start that the shortening of the work-week by one hour per year, being inferior to productivity gains, implies, for a weak rise in production volume (due to the stagnation of purchasing power and modest export gains), a mere *slowing* in the rise of unemployment,<sup>15</sup> whereas the president had been elected to actually reverse the trend altogether. At present, authorities hope at best that, by prolonging school enrollment and advancing retirement age, they can wait for the lowering of demographic pressure in 1985 to solve the problem for them!

However, the continuing world crisis, and France's particular place in it, makes the success of even that enterprise quite uncertain. For it is based on the hypothesis of growth, and on the idea that French consumption will engender (directly or via investment) French production. But one of the legacies of Giscardianism is precisely the extroversion of the economy. All growth of French

15. This is what is demonstrated by the famous "projections variétales" drawn up for the Plan from the D.M.S. model; in five years this reduction "saves" 80,000 jobs with respect to a projected tendency of 400,000 jobs lost! And since 200,000 new jobs are required each year for young people....

consumption gives rise to a disproportionate rise in imports; the trend is even more marked for French investment. We thus run against the barrier of outside constraints.

Whence the second source of inspiration of the economic policy, the winning back of the domestic market, or the home-centered restructuring of the productive apparatus, around the core of nationalized enterprise and with the aid of public credit, especially in the area of technology — in short, the reinforcement of state capitalism.<sup>16</sup>

This strategy depends on three conditions: 1) No great aggravation of the world crisis. Here, not much can be done. 2) Acceptance by workers of a compromise which would be less advantageous than that of Grenelle in June, 1968. And 3) The return of a notable portion of private entrepreneurs, executives and upper state administrators, to a developmentalist and nationalist ideology.

Here is where the Giscardian rupture weighs heavily. The dynamic, modernist entrepreneur who appreciates the favorable macro-economic effects of the rise in hourly wages has simply vanished. Premier Mauroy and Finance Minister Delors have often repeated their moving appeals to private enterprise, but the social base of the *Echange et Projet* group, which had backed the "New Society" campaign of Chaban-Delmas and favored Mitterrand in 1973, is no longer responding.<sup>17</sup> Where have they disappeared to? Roughly speaking, those who had been modernists at the end of the 1960's have become *mondialistes*. They no longer have any particular interest in French growth. In France, they seek to produce at lesser cost while maintaining maximum freedom to lay off workers. This ideology has penetrated not just the "divine right" sector of the bosses, but also the "technostructure" and even a portion of production-related executives (such as the engineers at Matra who threatened to emigrate to the U.S. if their firm was nationalized). Typical is the case of Pierre Moussa, reputed to be socialist at heart but who, as head of the financial group most traditionally linked to public expenditure, "emigrated to Coblenz" [i.e., conveyed large sums of money to Switzerland — translator's note] when he perceived the nationalization of Paribas as an attack of the multi-national instrument he had built.<sup>18</sup> As for the non-modernist small

16. By this I am simply designating productive enterprises which are state property, and capitalist by the production relations which reign there. I stress that this term implies neither bureaucracy nor the Gulag: I happen to think that the French nationalized firms are and will continue to be the most dynamic and on the whole the most socially advanced in France. Also, I believe that state capitalism is a good way to move beyond the short-term rationality of private capitalism which, by investing only in view of profits realized and markets anticipated, has allowed the French productive system to become both dependent and extroverted since 1974. See A. Hamdouche, "Investissements privés, investissements publics en France. Evolutions et déterminants (1959-1979)" in *Cahiers du Centre d'Etudes Industrielles* No. 3, Paris, 1982.

17. Whence the legendary bitterness of Delors. In his interview in the *Nouvel Observateur* (No. 310, November 9, 1981), in response to the question "Have you somewhat revised the idea you had of France?" he replied: "France is more immutable than changing. I had expected that the factors of modernity would be more widespread among the small and big decision-makers."

18. In the same vein, the monthly magazine *Expansion*, which at the end of the 60's had been the main organ of a modernist, social-democratic current of entrepreneurs, spent the first six

or medium entrepreneurs, they have remained reactionary along with their management staff, and see no reason to accept Delors' offers. Their "investment strike" has more than simply ideological motives. Placed on the bad side of "dual society," often in a sub-contracting position, they know that their competitiveness resides exclusively in the super-exploitation of workers, which the government's social policy seeks to curb. They perceive the nationalization of the firms on which they are dependent exclusively as a threat of "reintegration" of the tasks which they have sub-contracted up to now.

This very real duality of the industrial apparatus of the Giscardian era contradicts, in the short term, the dream of a "good duality" of a mixed economy, i.e., large national enterprises embedded in a dense tissue of modern, socially conscious and dynamic small and medium-sized firms.

Everything will therefore rest on the shoulders of the nationalized sector and the high administration. Significantly, the older representatives of a modernist medium-sized capitalism, such as Bidegain and Neuschwander, have taken refuge in this sector. However, even here the developmentalist party has been reduced very much to a minority, and the Socialist administration — either by excessive timidity, or for fear of a rise in Communist-controlled trade-union power, or simply for lack of available personnel<sup>19</sup> — have failed to move boldly to change the composition of this sector. One has the impression that the men placed by the Socialist Party at the head of Giscardianized state institutions (administrations or large enterprises) have taken less than six months to fall under the sway of the mentalities prevailing there. "Habitus," as Bourdieu would say, like the Germans in the Roman Empire, or the Bolsheviks in the Russian Empire! The meager "new rights" promised to workers will not suffice to reverse this tendency.

Under these conditions, the real cleavages within the Socialist Party-State are between those who willingly seek to adapt to the inherited model — i.e., respect for the "great equilibriums," free trade, and private capitalism — and those who hew to a more voluntarist, Jacobin, nationalist or even protectionist line. This is not a "right-left" opposition. Of course, any popular offensive which makes it difficult to respect compromises within the prevailing free-enterprise context would probably lead to a reinforcement of the public sector and a protectionist policy. But it must be understood that this Jacobin sector of the high public administration and the leaders of public enterprises are total partisans of the productivist ideal and the cult of "specialists" which make up the very soul of the Fordist model. In this sense, there are no people more "Japanese" in France than the technical managers of Renault, Electricité de France or the national railways (SNCF).

months of "change" locked in a hostile attitude toward the new administration, adopting a stance to the right of the *Nouvel Economiste* and sometimes close to the *Quotidien de Paris*.

19. Such is the excuse suggested by the satirical weekly *Le Canard Enchaîné*, which expressed its shock at the promotion of C. Stoffaës, theoretician of the dual society and architect of the policy of actively extroverting the economy, to a strategic post in the Ministry of Industry.

*And as Arlette\* Would Say, Workers Have Nothing to Gain....*

What do people such as these have to offer to the working class? Once again: a watered-down version of Grenelle. Let us recall that Grenelle represented a compromise, marking the end of "monopolist regulation" and the beginning of the most recent wave of intensive growth (1968-1974). For the workers, there was a shortening of the work-week (already!), a solidifying of social legislation, full employment and rising purchasing power (sigh). For the bosses: *carte blanche* to restructure, mechanize, robotize and generalize work. The Communist Party and the CGT held to this compromise in spite of a new working class left, which sought to promote struggles against the capitalist reorganization of labor, as against purely quantitative gains. These struggles ran out of steam as soon as the crisis period opened, with employment and income becoming the dominant preoccupations.

However, as early as Fall, 1981, we may observe — distant echo of the 1970-71 struggles — a flurry of strikes against capitalist productivity in the automobile industry. Not that workers are against productivity. What they reject, and justly so, is that productivity be imposed by a mechanism foreign to them, to the detriment of their minds and their health. Now, this "re-appropriation of the instrument of labor," which is of course difficult but ardently wished for by what still makes up a majority of the working class<sup>20</sup> — from the young unskilled worker disgusted by the job he is given to the "*ouvrier professionnel*" disgusted by the de-skilling of his job — is an aspiration which is totally foreign to the developmentalist framework, the great majority of the Socialist Party and the vision of Labor Minister Jean Auroux. The Plan, through its omissions, is woefully clear on this point: creativity is the business of managers and technicians: "The extension of workers' rights, far from reducing the responsibilities devolving on leaders, will allow for a more intense and richer social dialogue, making the enterprise a more lively place and favoring its advancement. Within the enterprise, the technically-trained executives and supervisors will play an active role in introducing modern technical processes and methods, improving work conditions and making the quality of goods and services evolve." (p. 58) Of course, no one in the Socialist Party, and less still in the Communist Party, would hesitate to add the highly qualified workers to this list, nor to advocate the re-skilling of labor. But it is on a single group, which makes up a tiny and shrinking majority, that "technical culture" would still repose: a social bloc which would unify the imaginative entrepreneur and the technically handy worker with the technician fond of innovations. This social bloc sends us back to the epic times of Mermoz' *Aéropostale*, or the *Ordinuvismo* of the young Gramsci, but today it exists in a vestigial state, in declining industrial areas like the Seine Saint-Denis or Saint-

\* Translator's note: Arlette Laguiller is the spokesperson of a small Trotskyist group called *Lutte Ouvrière*; she first gained national recognition for her impassioned televised appeals to worker solidarity during the presidential campaign of 1974.

20. See Danièle Linhart, *L'Appel de la sirène*, (Sycomore, 1981).

Etienne and — in a very marginal form — in certain highly advanced technical industries.

And what of the rest? The immigrants on auto assembly lines? The women who assemble electronic equipment? And all those young people who have spent several years going from one precarious job ("*boulot*," not "*métier*") to another? All those for whom work, as a concrete activity, is a form of repulsion — a purgatory made necessary by the need for money or social insertion? To bring them into the above bloc would require more than just "enterprise democracy" — it would require a veritable socio-technological revolution. This is not what the Socialist Party has in mind; it expects progress only from electronic fleas and bacteria. Or, as Mao once said of Deng: "He sees only technique and supervisors; he knows nothing of politics and the masses."

Immobilism, then, with respect to one of the two pillars of the wage relation: the relation between the direct producer and the means of production. What is being offered regarding the conditions of sale of labor power? A package of undecisive measures whereby, in exchange for a timid shortening of the workweek and maintenance of income, the bosses demand more and more freedom to decide how daily, monthly and annual work time will be shared out.

I propose a conjecture which cannot be proven but in which I deeply believe. Supposing that on May 20, 1981, in the midst of the post-electoral euphoria, the President had declared, in the Churchillian tone of which he is capable: "The hour is grave. There is an absolute evil: unemployment. I propose a complete sharing of labor: a 35-hour workweek or even less, without delay, so as to obtain an immediate and massive hiring of personnel — at the price, if necessary, of a reduction in monthly incomes except for the lowest wages." I submit that the majority of workers would have accepted it and would even have consented to negotiate the full utilization of machines (and thus a new wave of shift work, but this time in shifts of six hours or less).

A compromise of this sort, implying the overall renegotiating of the wage relation, would indeed have opened new horizons for the workers' use of time. When one works six or seven hours a day, one can accept forms of leisure which are based more on creative activity than on monetary consumption. but when one is offered 12 minutes less per day, one can only feel the loss in wages, and one knows full well that there will be no consequent hiring.

The Socialist Party hesitated to effect such a revolution. As for the *Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail* (CFDT), which could have backed such a project, its so-called "*recentrage*"<sup>21</sup> has led it to internalize the necessities of "capitalist accounting" to such a degree that it was the first labor organization — as early as June, 1981 — to advocate instituting a 35-hour work-week over a period of five years. Worse still, even the one-hour reduction in the work-week without a drop in wages failed to win the support either of the

21. See "La double complexité..." *op. cit.* If I rail against the CFDT, it's a sort of lovers' quarrel. After all, the CGT is only following the line it has always put forward.



bosses or the CFDT. When the ordinance of February, 1982 was issued, doing away with the 40th hour, workers had to fight for full compensation for the hour eliminated. And yet this compensation was one of the central features of the Plan. Since the shortening of the workweek by a single hour does not create jobs, then in the absence of growth, all lowering of wages (added to the 1% rise in social security taxes) reduces demand and jeopardizes the recovery, and thus contributes to more unemployment. That is why the Plan states clearly: "a one-hour shortening of the workweek should occur, from the time it takes effect, without a reduction in per capita wages. Subsequent negotiations should take into account the resulting hourly rise in wages, without provoking a loss in purchasing power. These projections should be understood as averages, and should therefore pose no obstacle to the faster rise of the lowest wages and the slower rise of higher ones." (p. 66)

Mitterrand was saying nothing different when he arbitrated, in March, 1982, in favor of full compensation for the eliminated hour.<sup>22</sup> The workers, the CGT, and the CFDT rank and file were perfectly right to fight for compensation. And CFDT secretary Edmond Maire was perfectly out of line in speaking of a "*faux pas* which sacrifices employment to purchasing power." There was only one *faux pas*, and it was a disastrous one because it precluded all curbing of unemployment: the refusal of the 35-hour week without delay, that is, a new sharing out of restricted time and free time, and thus a break with the one-dimensional logic of production.

In February, 1982, workers were not fighting only for compensation; they were fighting also — and especially — for control over the sharing-out of the new total volume of hours worked. This is what a woman in the metallurgy sector of the CFDT explained in her very interesting assessment of the strikes in the Paris region, in an interview with Danièle Linhart. The latter concludes: "They [the workers] are being offered an hour less per week and a fifth week of vacation spread out over the year. All this represents nothing decisive with respect to the status quo they have created with their absenteeism, among other factors. On the other hand, what is demanded in return by management, i.e., flexibility in the sharing-out and modulation of work-time, reinforces their power over the organization of the wage-earners' time. That is what counts the most for workers, the lost of which they object to the most. What they want is individual and collective control over their labor time. They want to choose for themselves. Variable work schedules, as you have shown,

22. Significantly, no one thought of associating this presidential verdict with the recommendations of the Plan voted through only two months before! The decision was interpreted, on the contrary, as a capitulation to CGT pressure — although workers and unionists of all tendencies were struggling around this issue. Let us note as well that the CFDT had been the first organization to support the famous agreement with the BSN company leading to a 33-hour workweek paid at 40 hours, without new hiring. As for those who believe that, without compensation of wages, the bosses would have been incited to hire, I invite them to reflect on the following: with the 1% rise in social security taxes, the earnings of wage-workers would have fallen by 3.4%. This is equivalent to the total consumption of automobiles by the French. Of course, the newly-hired workers would have consumed...had they been hired. That is the whole problem of "regulation."

may in a certain way satisfy these expectations. But doesn't the individualization of worktime constitute an important damper on trade-union action?"<sup>23</sup> The union militant replied to this question by criticizing routine methods and the frequent refusal by her union comrades to take real workers' aspirations into account. Union "purists" reject moveable work schedules and even the tendency by the workers to consolidate non-working hours into meaningful packages (such as all day Wednesday, or Friday afternoon, for example). Their claim is that this would damage the class solidity and demobilize it with respect to the main arena of struggle within the enterprise.

One well understands how such a refusal of the masses' aspirations leaves the field open to the bosses' initiatives and aggravates the crisis of traditional unionism. Between a management which seeks to transform its loss in work time into a gain the flexibility in the use of that time, and a multi-faceted wage-earning population whose crisis-ridden unionism no longer expresses widely diverse aspirations and interests in terms of unifying objectives for struggle, the government has chosen the worst of all policies: the accumulation of half-measures which offer no tangible advantage, but in which each sacrifice of past gains can only provoke clamor and solidify corporatist interests.

I do not wish by any means to incriminate trade-union militants who are working hard to cope with a very difficult situation; nor to formulate yet another accusation of reformist betrayals. I simply want to point out a perverse dynamic: By not proposing a radical reform of the wage relation, the government leaves no opening for the formation of a popular bloc which could provide support for its economic and industrial policy; on the contrary, it is simultaneously nourishing criticism from the right and workers' discontent which crystallizes itself in corporatist reactions. It is fortunate, at least, that these legitimate corporatist reactions can express themselves via the CGT rather than via fascist channels! Lacking clear aims and a sufficient balance of forces, the labor movement (and workers more generally) have proven unable to autonomously formulate an alternative project. It thus leaves the government, strongly pressured by the Right, and operating according to a logic which is developmentalist at best and pro-free-enterprise at worst, to advance proposals which are less and less suggestive of "change."

To carve out an alternative project would imply a profound challenge to trade-union practices. The organized labor movement should take into account the *diversity* of the profiles of wage-earners (not *just* the technicians, not *just* the "mass workers," not *just* the "precarious workers"). It should take into account the diversity of radical aspirations within each individual instead of locking people into the status of proletarians to be defended as much against their own worst penchants as against the boss. No one is just a producer: one is also a woman, a lover, a handyman, a citizen, an immigrant, a musician....The labor movement should resist the temptation of internalizing apparently objective constraints (and thus running the risk of being

23. *Partis Pris*, No. 34, February, 1982.

more attentive to the language of the technocrats than to the real aspirations of the masses) without ceding to the corporatist outbidding tactics. Once again, the situation is difficult and complex. But the progressive re-awakening of the base, and the non-repressive response that can be hoped for from the government,<sup>24</sup> has opened a space for the development of mass movements for the first time since 1976 (the last big wave of struggle against crisis conditions).

#### *Those Famous "New Middle Classes"*

Very similar problems are encountered on the other slope of the social-democratic stabilization policy: the installing of a new network of relay-classes which will occupy new institutions and fill out the new hegemonic bloc. With the decentralization and the aid to associative movements — including the law on free radio stations — the government has shown that it is in this area that it intends to move the fastest. This is of course the "easiest" area, in spite of its long-term nature, because it is here that economic and the most basic forms of class struggle weigh the least. It would be deeply erroneous, however, to believe that the "new petty bourgeoisie" seeks only to occupy the place left vacant by the collapse of older, archaic layers and the passivity of the popular masses.

First of all, what is the "new petty bourgeoisie?" If one defines it as those middle and upper categories of the public or private service sector, it will suffice to note that these layers have in fact existed for a long time (since the stabilization of the Republic at the end of the last century; they were already part of the "new elites" appealed to by Gambetta); they already had their place, in a certain manner, in the old hegemonic system. When one reads, in the editorial of the first issue of the review *Non!* that "the May '68 theme will allow the neo-petty bourgeoisie to play the role which has henceforth been assigned to them: subcontracting the tasks of supervision over the popular layers," one can only get lost in conjectures as to who is actually designated. For, after all, the supervisory tasks are by definition a part of the profession of executives (*cadres*), and the "Republic of teachers" does not date from June 20, 1981. Such a formulation, (if it does not result from pure ignorance) must therefore mean something like the following: "New petty-bourgeois wage-earners (other than schoolteachers and professors who have been occupying the territory as hussars of the Republic) will be given new supervisory tasks (other than strictly professional) which they will assume in the name of libertarian, feminist and ecological themes." In other words, private executives will seize control of townships and associations in the name of the May '68 revolt.

I do not know whether such a prospect actually frightens the CERES, or (already!) overjoys it. The real problem is that any hope that this will result in a social-democratic consolidation is, in my view, illusory.

24. I say "hope for." The anti-nuclear movement has experienced the contrary, in a situation, true enough, where it was apparently reduced to a violent minority activity.

The executive layers may perceive themselves from different angles: 1) As "owners" of a *savoir-faire* that they exercise for wages, thus from the liberal-professional angle; 2) As executors of delegated missions of command; 3) As intellectual fragments of the collective wage workers.

Obviously, these three components are mixed in variable proportions according to the effective place of a given executive in the relations of production. But the cocktail which makes up the "habitus" of the executive is itself modified and consolidated by school education, concrete forms of relations to other categories, the institutions which undertake to represent its interests, etc. In a remarkable article, Luc Boltanski<sup>25</sup> shows that in fact the "bourgeois wage-earners" are deeply polarized in their world-views along the axis of public vs. private sector; and within the private sector, along the axis of "management" vs. "technique." Private executives, whether they are products of top management schools or in-house promotion, believe in values as "rebellious" as....hierarchy, competence and competition!<sup>26</sup> As for those who refuse these values and come for the most part from mainstream universities (*pes facultés*), they have taken refuge precisely in the civil service (and especially in research, teaching and socio-cultural work); Daniel Cohn-Bendit once said of this sector that its very existence stifles the possibility of a network of alternative institutions like that of West Germany.

These observations not only place the "absurd polarization" between Rocard and Chevènement once again into perspective and reduces it to a complementarity of aspirations within a single social category (participation in the central state as opposed to local initiative), but also challenge the whole notion of a polarization between "old elites to the Right" and "new elites to the Left." In fact, petty bourgeois wage-earners can be "May '68ers" only through aspect No. 3 (critique of the division of labor, hierarchy, the power of money); for aspect No. 1 takes the form of "creativity." They can be on the Left through specific combinations of 1, 2, and 3 under the dominant theme of "wage-earner" as opposed to "wealthy" (*possédant*), but in that case they will tend to exchange their "cultural capital" for public power (this is the "developmentalist aspect of the technocrats, whose state directivism is akin to that of the teacher-deputies in the National Assembly), or for a wage in rent form, and, as is most often the case, both of these together. This is, after all, the very basis of the left version of the traditional hegemonic system; the Republic of teachers has always sought to recruit the children of the older middle classes into the civil service. This ideology of the competent and responsible functionary is hardly accessible to the "68 spirit" and is undermined by a con-

25. "L'Université, les entreprises et la multiplication des salariés bourgeois" in *Actes de la recherche en Sciences Sociales*, No. 34, 1980.

26. Contrary to a legend which gained currency in 1978 on the basis of the literary successes of a few ex-Maoists, competitive individualism was not a "value" of May '68. The dominant values of that movement was, on the contrary, solidarity and liberty. Historians may verify this by feeding archive material to their computers. By contrast, the young militants of the RPR (Jacques Chirac's party), more "absolutely modern" than Serge July himself, and fed to the gills with the elitist thesis of the New Right, are perfect representatives of this ideology.

tradition between its corporatist-rentier facet and its developmentalist-modernist facet.

However, the "neo-petty bourgeois" may be predominantly to the Right if their cultural capital and their command power welds them to the bloc of property owners and liberal elites. Such indeed is the behavior of the majority of upper executives — but not middle-level ones — who stayed largely in the sway of the Right in 1981. The corporatist organizational forms of the executives (their representation on enterprise committees, retirement plans, etc.) tendentially reconstitutes the bloc of executives (including "middle" and even "lower" ones) and the wealthy: this is the phenomenon that in Chile, under Allende, was known as *gremialism*. This is what the *Confédération Générale des Cadres* (CGC) plays on, as well as the autonomous teachers unions, "Medical Solidarity" (sic) and others.

Unfortunately, here again, the Socialist Party is doing nothing to break up this bloc, autonomize the middle executives with respect to the upper executives and aggravate the contradiction which opposes them overall to the wealthy. None of this is easy to do and it would require radical reforms. Without even speaking of the division of labor, let us consider the problem of taxation and other mandatory payments to the state (such as social security dues). At present, the share of mandatory payments on income adds up to only half for non-wage-earners of what it does for wage-earners; the burden is greater on industrial workers than on upper executives (because of the ceiling on social security payments and the family quotient). Executives recover 150% of what they pay into their retirement funds; manual workers, 101%<sup>27</sup> Only a drastic reform attacking the interests of the non-wage-earning wealthy, could re-establish solidarity among wage-earners without making the executives scream. The Socialist Party's projects seem to be far removed from this perspective; and this tends to lend credence to the idea that the gremialist defense of acquired advantages pays.

A similar phenomenon is occurring within those middle classes which are considered typically "archaic": the farmers. Nonetheless, it has been 15 years since the layer of so-called "dynamic small entrepreneurs," the middle-sized farmers, have succeeded in modernizing and evicting from the leadership of their unions the traditional agrarian classes who had rallied the peasantry together under the banner of "property." Today, the newer elites, products of the Gaullist agricultural policy, who seek to unite the farmers against the Left government do so as "entrepreneurs," exacting protection from the state against the European Economic Community price-setting mechanism, natural disasters, etc. To break up this modernist-gremialist agrarian bloc would involve insisting on the "productive" aspect of the small farmer, and in particular the "producer exploited by agro-business firms and the Crédit Agricole bank;" this would require a radical reform of the status of farmer and a challenge to the productivism which predominates in agriculture. This,

27. See C. Blum-Girardeau, *Les tableaux de la Solidarité*, D. E. Economica, 1981).

indeed, is what is demanded by the farmers' organized Left, in particular the *Confédération des Travailleurs Paysans* led by Bernard Lambert. In this case, then, there is an alternative project formulated by a social movement, and as G. Allaire has noted, it is up to the government to construct a Left social base and break up the organic monopoly of the *Fédération Nationale des Syndicats des Employés de l'Agriculture* (FNSEA) by underwriting the demand for reform from a progressive sector of the base. It is the government's turn to move — but once again, even more markedly and with even less excuse than in the 35-hour work-week affair, it has hesitated, toyed with half-measures, and allowed the FNSEA's gremialist opposition to consolidate itself.<sup>28</sup>

For neither the executives nor the farmers, then, is there an identity relation between "socio-economic novelty" and a socialist stance, or even support to a Left government. Not only do the upper executives and the "small dynamic entrepreneurs" of agriculture have no strategic interest in questioning the capitalist order in general, but even tactically they have no evident interest in "change," because they had already found their place in the "blocked society," whether it be because the latter managed to adjust itself or because they had an interest in retaining the values of the archaic hegemonic bloc. What is more serious, the failure to challenge the structures which allow these categories to support the immediate demands which place other "supporting layers" under their leadership (middle executives, the entire farming population) favors the consolidation of blocs of professionals which unite "those above" with "those below" against the Left government: *that* is gremialism.

From this viewpoint, it would no doubt have been preferable to look after the complementary retirement funds (which by their very existence constitute the statute of executive) or the parastate agricultural apparatus (which at present is largely the fiefdom of the FNSEA) rather than choosing by priority to reform the sharing out of powers between the local and national levels of the state ("*le pays légal*"). For elections to posts of political responsibility merely sanction the crises or the consolidation of class alliances which are formed elsewhere. If the Right exercises hegemony over the center on this terrain, it will win local elections even more easily than the national ones, and the decentralization will merely provide it with another weapon for consolidating its clientèle.<sup>29</sup>

All things considered, the likelihood of a social-democratic stabilization is anything but evident. The victory came too late: the crisis of Giscardian "*mondialisation*" (that is, economic extroversion unfavorable to France) jeopardized its economic base. The difficulties have come far less from leftist outbidding tactics from the workers' rank and file (which has been remarkably reasonable for the past year) than from the brutal refusal of the possessing classes and all other elites, modern or archaic, to make peace. In this situation,

28. See the interview with B. Lambert and the article by G. Allaire (an editor of *Nouvelles Campagnes*) in *Partis Pris*, No. 35, March, 1982.

29. As I re-read this text before sending it to the printer on the day after the first round of cantonal elections (April, 1982), I can only shudder at this prospect.

the possibility of a revolutionary dynamic growing out of a Left electoral experience is totally mythical, given the ideological disarray of most of the social movements; but explosions of discontent, traded off for corporatist advantages, are not to be excluded....and they would be catastrophic. They would make all the more probable a gremialist crystallization of discontent or disappointment, which would be sanctioned quickly by an electoral defeat of the Left.

Particularly dangerous would be the following line of reasoning: "Votes for the Left cannot move rightward; the main thing is to hold the center by governing from the center." This argument forgets that the base of the Left can become demobilized. Who can "conquer the center" if not the social base of the Left? What can accomplish this, if not those millions of discussions, pursued over several years, between relatives, friends, colleagues, in which people who have been won over to the Left — all tendencies included — slowly convince others that "with the Left, things will be better?" Today, these supporters are hushing up in embarrassment; or else they are already acknowledging that "they" [the Left politicians] are no better than the others. The Socialist government, drunk on its victory, rapidly burned its bridges with the ecologists and the far Left (who make up, after all, 10-20 of the "people of the Left"), who had culturally prepared the victory over a ten-year period and supported it politically in the final years preceding the victory. These people will not vote for the Right, and would make it a point to vote against a Chirac,<sup>30</sup> but they will no longer struggle to urge others to vote for the Socialist Party.

Today, in reality, the only probable center of gravity on the Left — if there is such a point — is further to the Left than the social modernism which has characterized up to now the government of Premier Mauroy. To consolidate the social bases of change means first of all not losing strength on the Left (among former *gauchistes*, Left ecologists and related groups, but also among former Communist Party members for whom being disgusted with Georges Marchais does not mean being any less demanding on the Socialists); it also means transforming the conditions of existence of the "center" so that it may begin to perceive any step backwards from reform as a disadvantage. Radical reforms are called for to modify the general conditions for class alliances moving in the direction of certain popular aspirations: not the consolidation of corporatist demands, but the challenge — partial at least — to certain basic social relations, such as the wage relation, the status of the farmer, etc.

Paradoxically, then, the consolidation of social-democratic reformism must take place via a more "radical" turn (which is, incidentally, a constant in French history, where "reforms are made only under the impact of revolutions"). The current government will spontaneously oppose this, not so much by a pusillanimity traditionally considered to be the very mark of reformism; nor by the tactical consideration of not wishing to frighten the center;

30. Just as in Germany, they once again preferred Schmidt to Brandt in 1981. But the "citizens' movements" which had supported Brandt are lost to the SPD.

but because often these radical demands go against modernist-productivist ideology — against the much-vaunted "technical culture." Not that the mechanized but bankrupt farmer-workers, the solar energy fanatics, the unskilled workers in robotized factories, etc. *refuse* "technology." On the contrary, they are saturated with it — often much more so than the literary spirits who sit in the National Assembly. But technology is the materialization of social relations; they are simply not in favor of the *same* technology.

In short, following a rather classic logic, reformists are not attracting mass support because their social (economic, political and cultural) project diverges from popular aspirations; this lack of support weakens the reformists and the entire Left against the Right and thus jeopardizes the "social-democratic stabilization;" The only forces which would be capable of blocking this dynamic are popular movements which would oblige the government to take their aspirations into account, by integrating them into a more advanced overall project.

Thus, one cannot call for "revolutionary opposition" to the Left government. Such a position would be appropriate to a situation in which a combative modernism tried to impose, with the support of a sizeable portion of the bourgeoisie, a restructuration antagonistic to popular interests and aspirations. This is now the case only in energy policy, which is in fact the only domain in which a violent opposition to the current regime has manifested itself from the Left.<sup>31</sup> This is not the case within the working class or the farming population: here, the Right is confronting a government which is already going "too far," and the Left is confronting a government which is not going "far enough." What is required today is not "critical support" (for what?); what is required is to reflect, to make proposals, to struggle for their acceptance and to combat their refusal.<sup>32</sup>

The men and women who have struggled since 1968 — or well before then — in all fields of social change, for justice, freedom, individual and collective emancipation, against stunting and alienating social relations, sometimes against the Socialist Party and usually without it; those who, too often defeated in concrete struggles, have done infinitely more to change mentalities than all the electoral posters vaunting "the other path" and "the quiet force;" those who danced at the Bastille in May, 1981 for the victory of a man who did not represent them but in whom they were ready to place their confidence — these people are faced once again, in spite of their discouragement, with heavy responsibilities. No, things have not become any easier since the victory of the Left. They have only become possible. And not for very long.

31. If one wants to counterbalance this example of anti-popular modernism by the CERES and the Communist Party — with an example of anti-popular Rocardian modernism, one might expect to find it in the area of winegrowing, in which farmers who are currently won over to the Left are fighting free-trade policies. Is that a corporatist reflex? Perhaps. But what does the Left have to win by sacrificing hundreds of thousands of supporters in return for a few centimes less per liter of red table wine?

32. This was not my position in 1976 (see "Derrière les programmes, voir les forces," *op. cit.*) either because the situation has really changed or because, after all, I may have mellowed out a bit (*mis de l'eau dans mon vin*)....