

Building an Alternative Movement in France*

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To build an Alternative movement in France with a non-marginal ambition (because, in this sense, such a movement already exists), but rather with a "hegemonic" vocation (in the Gramscian sense of the term, of proposing a different future for the national collectivity), implies at the very least the need to define what an "Alternative" is. In turn, this implies a particular theorization about social change. In this paper, I will first present to Anglo-Saxon readers a brief (and very subjective) survey of the legacy of the past quarter of a century in French Marxism concerning this issue. Then I will try to define what such an Alternative could be, before considering some of the possibilities for transforming this Alternative into a political force.

From Althusser to the "Regulation School"

In France the entire generation of May '68 came to know Marxism via the work of Louis Althusser and his school. Up until now in France, all that is written within a Marxist cultural atmosphere that is still fertile (a very rare event) remains marked by these origins. Having said this, one cannot deny the importance of existentialist Marxism and the philosophy of praxis (in particular, the work of Henri Lefebvre). Nor can one deny the negative effects of the "structuralist Marxism" of the second Althusser, after *Reading*

Capital (Althusser and Balibar 1965). Rather, it is simply to recognize that the success of the articles in *For Marx* (Althusser 1965) engaged French Marxism in a nondeterministic direction. I mean "nondeterministic Marxism" in a double sense: synchronic and diachronic. A distant echo of such an understanding of history underlies this article.

To begin with, Althusser taught us to conceive of historical reality as a fabric of contradictory relations, *autonomous* from one another, although overdetermined by each other and not "reflecting" each other (see, for example, "Contradiction and Overdetermination" in Althusser 1965). Neither politics nor ideology are "reflections" of economic forces; yet there are ideological/political/economic "configurations" which are either stable configurations or crisis configurations. Thus, since the 1960s, French Marxism has distanced itself from any sort of "logic of capital" reductionism. We have even been drawn to discovering a plurality of "modes of production" (typical configurations of relations) articulating with each other in each social formation (Rey 1969): in sum, society as a configuration of configurations.

Since this time, for example, domestic social relations (patriarchy or *sexage*¹) could be studied in themselves, without previously subordinating them to "capitalism." As everywhere, France has experienced the disagreements between "socialist feminists" and "radical feminists." But, in France, it has been less virulent than elsewhere (hidden, it is true, by common opposition to the antimisogynist and nonfeminist movement, "Psychoanalysis and Politics"; however, this is another story). The mutual autonomy and overdetermination of social relations offers a theoretical substratum in which to think about the autonomy and convergence of social movements. In this text I will attempt to explain that this opportunity has scarcely been seized politically, yet the possibility for such a convergence and its theoretical articulation exists none the less.

Althusser and his school (in particular Etienne Balibar in his contribution to *Reading Capital* and Charles Bettelheim 1970) otherwise broke with a determinist vision of historical evolution by considering the "productive forces" themselves (the traditional "locomotives" of history in Stalinist

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1. This term has been developed recently in French feminist analysis to distinguish attitudes about women, "sexism," from a social relation, "sexage." It is thus akin to English-speaking feminists' conception of gender discrimination. Lipietz refers to the work of Colette Guillaumin (1978) when using this term. See n. 8.—Trans.

Marxism) as social relations embedded in the organization of production. Having done this, French Marxism (including André Gorz) was only the local correspondent of a larger current which, from Maoists to American "radicals" and including Italian "operatists," centered its attacks on capitalism in the 1960s and 1970s, not so much on the extraction of surplus value, but on the dominant industrial paradigms of the postwar period which were accepted by the Communist Parties: Taylorism and Fordism. This was a criticism in step with the reality of workers' struggles in that period, but particularly in opposition to the idea of "the development of capitalist productive forces *preparing* communism." Capitalism does not prepare anything other than itself. Moreover, in time, it has experienced and developed various productive forces (that is, forms of organizing work).

At the political level, this double break with determinism was primarily developed by Nicos Poulantzas (1968) and his reading of Gramsci. Instead of the simple and permanent confrontation between "bourgeoisie/proletariat," Poulantzas substituted the stabilization and dilution of successive "hegemonic historical blocs," each time newly constituted, encompassing the dominant and the dominated, with struggles over the limits and terms of the social compromise on the basis of a new articulation of social relations.

These rich basic intuitions unfortunately became frozen in a sort of formal scholasticism such that social relations were no longer understood as contradictions, as unstable tensions, but as structures. This evolution became explicit from the time of *Reading Capital*. Althusserianism came to refuse the contradictory character of social relations themselves, and thus the autonomy of individuals and groups taken within these relations and their capacity to constitute themselves as social subjects capable of transforming structures. This was a return to a pre-Marxist materialism, forgetful of Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* and cut off from the transforming practice of the masses (see Lipietz 1973). This petrification could only but lead to the crisis of structuralist Marxism and, in fact, of all of French Marxism in the middle of the 1970s (in a rather weighty political conjuncture).

However, the work of Michel Foucault (insisting upon the multiplicity of power relations) and the books of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (insisting upon the multiform and polycentric character of "antisystem forces") have maintained an open conceptualization, irreducibly pluralist, of real history. Sociologists of Pierre Bourdieu's school (like Luc Boltanski) have insisted less and less on the quasi-automatic character of social reproduction. Rather, the concept of *habitus*, which signifies both the disposition to conform to existing structures but also to "play" with them and thus modify them, allows

one to think simultaneously about the tendency towards permanence and the tendency towards social change.

In economics, the "Regulation School" can be considered as a movement going beyond structuralist Marxism (including Michel Aglietta, Robert Boyer, Benjamin Coriat, myself, etc.), seriously taking into account the *contradictory* character of capitalism, understood as an articulation of commodity relations, wage labor relations, and work relations.²

First of all, this knot of contradictions, far from identically reproducing itself or even "deepening itself," could undergo several stable and very typified solutions through history, combining an industrial paradigm and a macroeconomic structure. These are solutions that we have termed "regimes of accumulation." But these stable solutions, considered *ex post*, cannot explain their own stability: they only manifest the fact that capitalism's contradictions have been temporarily resolved. Thus, the day-to-day forms of resolving these contradictions must be taken into account. Evoking "immanent laws" will not suffice, no more than looking to some generalized mechanism such as "competition." We have termed "modes of regulation" the totality of institutional forms and implicit norms that assure the consistency of behaviors and expectations within the framework of the regime of accumulation in place, despite and even via the contradictory character of social relations. And we have shown that the modes of regulation themselves have been variable over time and space, and relatively autonomous with respect to regimes of accumulation (although overdetermining them in a configuration of stability or crisis).

Thus the concept of "model of development" has been theoretically established: founded upon an industrial paradigm, stabilizing itself in a regime of accumulation, and guaranteed by a mode of regulation. Implicitly, instead of the sharp alternative between capitalism and socialism, a sequence of successive models of development has been substituted, interrupted by *major crises* where history opens itself up to a nondeterministic outcome which is produced through struggles and social compromises. Notions of "reform" and "revolution" are thus relativized. Capitalism can change enormously between two models of development, particularly according to the strength and orientation of the workers' movement, and the compromises that it will accept (Lipietz 1985b). Inversely, "socialist revolutions" now only appear as "changes in the model of development" (for example, the passage to

2. For a basic introduction in English to the concepts of the "Regulation School," see Lipietz (1984b, 1985d) and Jenson and Lipietz (1987).

state capitalism based upon Taylorism and accumulation in Marx's Department 1 (see Chavance 1987).

To draw out some conclusions from this remodeling of economic theory in terms of political science means thinking in terms of another triangle: how a "hegemonic bloc" which is based upon a regime of accumulation can guarantee the existence of a mode of regulation (see Lipietz 1985c). Then, in order to think about social change, we must ask ourselves: how is it that new elements accumulated in the ideological sphere (or, more precisely, what Jane Jenson 1986 calls the "Universe of Political Discourses") end up putting the cultural paradigm that cements the former hegemonic bloc into crisis? In building a new model of development, how does a new paradigm emerge with a logic in concert with a new hegemonic bloc? It is the embryonic exploration of this fundamental problem that has led me to the present reflection on the French experience about building an Alternative in politics.

What Is an Alternative Opposed to?

As paltry and banal as this seems, the content of an Alternative is already partially designated by its title. To say that there is an "other" manner (of living, of working) is to break a consensus according to which there could only be one possible kind of politics (with, according to the particular party, either "more" or "less" of it), or one model of development that dictates the technological revolution and where free enterprise will lead us under the constraints of international competition.

To affirm an Alternative is already to reaffirm the political possibility of a collectivity bearing upon its own destiny. This likewise implies that a collectivity does not define itself in terms of a biological factor (a blood group, such as the "French"), nor as an empirical reality condemned to "winning" (against other nations) under the penalty of disappearing, but rather defines itself in terms of a community sharing a minimal agreement on what is just and good to build together (Lipietz 1986).

In this sense, the Alternative has the same ambitions as eighteenth-century liberals, radicals of the Third Republic, or socialists in later times. While, as a political force, it recognizes that it will never encompass all of France, it does intend to propose a new "paradigm" to all, a new "shared meaning [*sens commun*]" of life in a society. I even believe that this is the only paradigm to put forth for the twenty-first century, upon the ruins of the social democratic paradigm, and in opposition to the liberal productivist paradigm.

For, to be defined as Alternative is necessarily to be opposed to something else. Further, in the midst of a great crisis where, according to Gramsci, "the

old dies out and the new has not yet been born," it is to define oneself in relation to both "the old" and *another* "new" that also struggles for a paradigmatic role.

"The old," this is what some economists call the "Fordist compromise,"³ while certain political scientists call it the "social democratic compromise." The rules of this are already known:

- The organization of production is reserved to dominant groups (bosses, technocrats) according to an extensive application of the Taylorist industrial paradigm which excludes "executors" from any intellectual involvement in the organization of work⁴
- The popular masses are left with a share of productivity gains through a set of legislative and contractual forms of regulation such that, with purchasing power growing along with productivity, full employment is almost assured
- This sharing of productivity gains operates via direct wage payments or via the Welfare State, but in both cases it is in the form of money which gives access to commodity outputs

To put things differently, the Fordist paradigm offers a conception of progress that rests upon three legs: technical progress (understood as technological progress unconditionally pushed on by "intellectual workers"), social progress (understood as the progression of purchasing power), and State progress (understood as the guarantee of the general interest against "infringement" by individual interests). Such a conception of progress gives primacy to "hierarchy"⁵ over markets. It is "organicist" in the sense that in principle it does not exclude anyone from "sharing in the fruits of progress" (in practice, clearly there are always those who are excluded). On the other hand, it systematically excludes unskilled producers from control over their activities and excludes ordinary citizens from deciding upon what should be

3. The "Fordist compromise" or more broadly, the "Fordist model" has been largely described and theorized by French economists from the regulation school (e.g., Aglietta 1976; Lipietz 1979, 1985a) and, before them, by theoreticians of "intensive accumulation" (A. Granou and B. Billaudot). Theorizations by Italian "operatists" (R. Panzieri, M. Tronti, and A. Negri) are similar. Theorizations by certain American "radicals" in terms of a "capital-labor truce" and "social structures of accumulation" are also not very different.

4. On the concept of "industrial paradigm," see Perez (1983).

5. "Hierarchy" refers to both the contrast within Anglo-Saxon political economy between "hierarchy" and "markets" (and between "politics" and "markets"), and the contrast shown by Dumont (1977) between "hierarchical" and "egalitarian" principles. According to hierarchical principle, "those on high" do not concern themselves with everything, only important things.

accepted as progress (in terms of consumer goods, public services or urbanization, and more generally, in terms of the ecological consequences of progress). Social solidarity itself, organized by the Welfare State, takes on a strictly administrative form.

This Fordist paradigm was imposed after 1945 in advanced capitalist countries under pressure from New Dealers or social democrats after the defeat of the fascist alternative to classical liberalism, and as a rival to the Soviet alternative. Yet, this paradigm has been manageable by conservative political forces or Christian democrats, as well as by social democrats with or without the support of communists. It is in this sense that it has constituted a "hegemonic paradigm," one which has imposed itself upon all, while at the same time meriting the name of "social democratic."

This compromise entered into crisis on all sides at once: a fall in the profitability of the Fordist productive model; an internationalization of markets and production which is compromising national regulation; a revolt of producers against the alienation of work; citizens' aspirations for more autonomy; and a growing reticence before administrative solidarity.⁶

The *Programme commun* [Common Program] of the French Left (signed in 1971) can be considered as the radicalized culmination of the Fordist compromise. This Left, the Communist Party (CP) and the Socialist Party (SP), generally contributed to the consolidation of this model at the time of the Liberation, under the Fourth Republic, and even when in opposition under Gaullism. The CP and the SP thus appear as *the Left of the Fordist compromise*.

It is not by chance that in May '68 the huge youth and working-class movement largely escaped the control of the Left parties, at times opposing them as strongly as the Gaullist regime. The May '68 movement marked the first mass revolt against the Fordist paradigm. It was interrupted by the Grenelle Accords of June '68 in which unions obtained a massive extension of "social advantages" within Fordism in return for halting the largest strike ever in history (nine million strikers over three weeks). All subsequent anti-Fordist social movements—ecologists, regionalists, feminists⁷—would then

6. On the world crisis of the Fordist economic model of development, see Lipietz (1985a). For a broader analysis (including ideological and political aspects), but limited to France, see Lipietz (1984a, 1987).

7. Revolt against Fordist productivism and its consequences for territories necessarily translates into an ecologist and regionalist hostility. Feminism's relationship to Fordism is more complex. Fordist "wage-labor society" (Aglietta and Brender 1984), in its own organicism, offers women who have been enclosed in patriarchal relations for centuries the opportunity for partial liberation, in any case, the possibility of "getting out of the house."

first develop apart from the classic Left. But, in the 1970s, economic crisis and successive defeats brought a progressive and not very enthusiastic rallying of the May Sixty-Eighters to the parties of the *Programme commun* (especially to the SP). The CP and SP were perceived as representing at least a partial political outlet for their aspirations and, in any case, as defenders of a nonreactionary solution to the crisis.

This Left, coming to power when the Fordist compromise was already economically decrepit and ideologically eroded, could not but fail. The strengthening of solidarity via the State (recruiting of civil servants, the proposal for nationalizing private schools) did not garner any enthusiasm. The attempt to stimulate the economy by popular spending ran up against the trade deficit and the collapse of investment (Lipietz 1984a, 1987).

The strength of the void and the power of attraction from Californian and Japanese myths (however dissimilar), led a portion of the Left coalition (the leadership of the SP) to rally around a new paradigm: liberal management of technological change.⁸ This is a new paradigm in the process of formation and very far from being established. This model includes the following elements:

- Accentuation of the technico-economic productivist imperative, now “categorical,” with abandonment of the idea of an explicit democratic social choice (invest because it is necessary to export, export because it is necessary to invest)
- Fragmentation of the “social,” with the enterprise directly playing the role formerly attributed to the motherland (we must tighten our belts against competitors)
- A large variety of ways to integrate the individual into the enterprise, going from pure discipline to negotiated involvement, but always on an individual basis and with a disappearance of social individuality in a class sense
- A general retreat of social welfare of an administrative type linked to belonging to a national collectivity; “civil society” (that is, particularly,

This shows the significance of the continual demand of the Women’s Movement for the reimbursement of abortion by the Social Security System (a demand satisfied by the Left in 1982, but out of the State’s budget). But the oppression of women is much more than “patriarchial.” Colette Guillaumin (1978) speaks more generally of *sexage*, without overestimating the role of family structure. Within Fordist wage-labor relations, salaried women encounter the hierarchical structure of *sexage*, but this time from a position in which they may fight it collectively (Jenson 1986).

8. For an outline of what I call the “liberal productivist” paradigm, see Lipietz (1988).

the family) is now supposed to take up what the Welfare State can no longer guarantee

The blossoming of slogans such as "A France that wins" in the imagery of the March 1986 electoral campaign, from the SP to the Right, translates a rather general convergence towards this liberal productivist paradigm (with, as always, its "Left" and its "Right"). The French CP has clearly expressed its intent not to support this. But, the CP's very beautiful slogan—"Above all, do not give up"—in reality did not offer any prospects. For it no longer means "at least, we try" (the keynote of new models aiming for hegemony), but simply the despair of "the old that dies." It will be extinguished with the last professional worker in the last factory of the working-class county of Seine St. Denis.

As expected, the elections gave the Right a crushing majority, with a strong proportion of votes (ten percent) for the reactionary and xenophobic extreme Right. The "nonextreme" Right thus believed it could fully carry out its government program, that is, the right-wing version of the liberal productivist paradigm (explicitly Reaganist). To general surprise, the Right saw young people rise up against it, those who were thought to be depoliticized or supportive of liberal economic ideas ("everyone for themselves"). In reality, an attentive observer would have taken into account the success of antiracist movements among young people (such as *Touche pas à mon pote*—"Keep your hands off my buddy"), or the solidarity campaigns with the Third World extolled by "humanist" and very popular singers. But, confronted with the authoritarian establishment of selection for entrance into universities, a million young people went into the streets in November 1986, demanding "equality." They made the Chirac government retreat, not only on the issue of university entrance, but, in the heat of the moment, on other repressive proposals (e.g., anti-immigrant and antidrug initiatives). This victory gave the signal for a cascade of long, intense self-managed strikes in the public services. Strikes which, lacking clear and precise objectives, petered out with limited results.

These revolts fundamentally express the same values as those of the May Sixty-Eighters: autonomy and solidarity. But, in confronting a different enemy (liberal productivism), they put forth *first* equality (against the market and economic liberalism), and then the will for autonomy, for liberty. For liberal productivism is opposed to the Fordist paradigm in that it is no longer organicist—though it does remain "hierarchical," in the sense that it excludes the immense majority from playing the game of free enterprise.

Ambitions and Problems of the Alternative

In brief, what is the Alternative opposed to in the old Fordist paradigm which is dying out and in the liberal productivist paradigm which hopes to see the light? Certainly not a refusal of technical progress, yet assuredly a refusal to take such progress as a value in itself. Three themes define the yardstick against which to gauge all "progress" and all politics: *autonomy* of individuals and groups, *solidarity* between individuals and groups, and *ecology* as a principle for relations between society, the products of social activity, and the environment.

Thus, in response to the crisis of the Fordist paradigm, the Alternative calls for:

- The transformation of relations between people and work towards greater control by producers over their activity
- A reduction in the amount of time consecrated to wage labor and, as a consequence of this, a lessening of commodity relations in consumption and leisure to the benefit of free creation
- The systematic choice of the most ecological technologies, that is, those that are the least predatory with respect to natural resources, recycling, and the most complete restoration possible of the by-products of human activity and of industrial and urban wastes
- The transformation of hierarchical social relations other than wage-labor relations, primarily in the feminist and antiracist sense
- The transformation of forms of social welfare within the national collectivity, from a purely monetary redistribution towards the subsidization of self-organized activity having an agreed upon social utility
- An evolution towards grass roots forms of democracy, more "organic" and less delegative
- The questioning of unequal relations among national collectivities, towards relations that are mutually advantageous for autocentered communities

The concrete bases for what could be an "Alternative economy" will not be developed here (see Lipietz 1988), nor the forms of state implicit in the Alternative paradigm, nor the means for transition between the Fordist model and the Alternative model. To hold to the theme of this intervention, the Alternative's place within the context of the current French political scene must still be specified.

First of all, as a new paradigm the Alternative is not situated in the Right-Left polarization characteristic of the former Fordist paradigm. If, in the next twenty to thirty years, an Alternative thus defined gains the place of a hegemonic paradigm such that, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, political forces situate themselves relative to it, then it will have its own right, center, and left. But, in 1988 the Alternative cannot situate itself "to the left of the Left," if the second "Left" refers to the current Left (or rather the Left of 1981), that is, the Left of the Fordist compromise.

Yet, in so far as the new model is presented as "progressive," the Alternative takes up the tradition of what, at other times, has been radicalism, socialism, and communism. More profoundly, its initial social base must bring together the oppressed and the exploited in a revolt against alienating social relations: women, workers who are victims of industrial restructuring or of deskilling technologies, the unemployed and insecure, multicultural young people in the suburbs, farmers "outside of the system [*hors-normes*]," and so on. Thus the Alternative follows upon all emancipatory movements. In this sense, a historical sense, the Alternative is a "new Left." This poses for it the same problems facing socialism and then communism under the Third Republic. *External Problems*: its relation to political forces situated to the left of competing paradigms, be it, in terms of our comparison, "class against class" or a "republican concentration."⁹ *Internal Problems*: the convergence of those coming out of the old model and those who radically reject the old model due to a variety of criticisms. These two types of problems are clearly linked. The West German Greens have already come up against them for quite awhile in the difficult debate between "realists" and "fundamentalists." Because the Greens, with more material, have been able to confront a *third fundamental problem*: that of the relation between social movements and political representation.

The Issue of Representation

Let us begin with the basic problem of social movements and political representation. All historical social forces have started out existing in practice before existing as a program or a party. Groups, mutuals, unions, and workers' cooperatives have preceded Internationals and national parties.

9. "Class against class" was a sectarian tactic of the Communist Party at the end of the 1920s, in which all other political forces were considered as "one single reactionary bloc." "Republican concentration" was an electoral alliance of all Leftists (radical, socialist, and communist) against all Rightists.

They have existed before recognizing themselves as a "socialist movement," even if from the start they had their own utopias.

However, the oppressed, the exploited, and all those who are denied within the dominant paradigm have need of representation. Not only and not immediately to "take political power" and to make it play in their favor (which, moreover, is not possible without profound transformations at the base); but, simply, to be able to recognize themselves as a social force sharing the same aspirations, to make others recognize that such aspirations exist, and to win over other social strata to these aspirations. However, representation, political or not, always implies a form of rupture, indeed even usurpation, between the representatives and the represented. This is not only because representatives may have their own interests (Bourdieu 1987), but more profoundly, because being charged with interests not taken into account and assessing the difficulty of having them taken into account, they have a tendency to be more "realistic," that is, to write themselves into the dominant paradigm.

A consistent French characteristic is the rapidity, thus often the superficiality, of movement to the institutional political scene. Probably an Alternative movement would see forms of political expression flourish prematurely. These might then temporarily dry up, lacking sufficient roots in a social movement. For example, one could say that ecology politics has already had its "split at Amiens"¹⁰ with the coexistence of a base movement of environmentalists along with small political groups claiming to represent them (such is the case today with the party entitled "The Greens, Ecology Confederation—Ecologist Party"). In the same vein, the "self-management [*autogestion*] movement," a conglomeration of political circles and groups who refer to self-management, has only a little to do with what is concretely happening in the serious debates on restructuring within the union movement, or with the multitude of experiences or semi-institutional alternative activities in neighborhoods and in the countryside.

This large distance between the two should not be considered as an aberration or as an inevitability. It must be recognized that this separation shall exist, that the tendency to "politicize too quickly" is a response to the specifically French need for an immediate representation on the political and, today, media scene. But there must also be a continual attempt to reduce this separation (indeed it is specifically the Alternative's intention to "conduct

10. At the turn of the century, in the Charter of Amiens, French trade unions refused to recognize any "workers' party" that might arise as the legitimate political representative of the workers' movement.

politics differently"). The Alternative movement cannot exist as a truth "brought to the masses from the outside by qualified intellectuals," according to Lenin's formula. Refusing in its essence such a "Taylorist politics," the Alternative can only exist as a collective intellectual, necessarily federalist. It must have a capillary relation with all of the individual separate experiences in the movement, which will only be able partially to recognize themselves in all of the more general orientations an Alternative could propose.

In other words, any political force which brings together "militants of the Alternative" must be of a variable geometry. Sometimes, in certain concrete struggles, it must dissolve itself into the general social movement, and its militants will not have to defend different interests outside of the movement. At other times, to express a position consistent with the interest of all the alternative social movements, especially in an electoral battle, an Alternative political force must be capable of *proposing* a more general point of view than that held by each particular movement. It must also recognize that it only "represents" these movements to the extent that they wish, that it has no a priori legitimacy, and that its legitimacy can only come from the always revokable adhesion of the base movements to its propositions.¹¹

By contrast, the experience of social democratic or Bolshevik models for the workers' movement (where the Party poses itself as the organizer and sole legitimate representative of the social movement that it represents) underscores the fragility of such a form of representation. Yet, strength can also be seen here, on the condition that the means for regulating this contradiction between autonomous social movements and global political representation are found. This point must be emphasized: lacking any political expression, a social movement will seek it out by substitution (for instance, within the Socialist Party). But lacking any roots, its political expressions will turn towards sects.

At the limit, the period of post-1968 Leninist groups can be considered as an illegitimate codification of May '68, the first large-scale mass movement with an alternative content. Believing that they could speak in the name of this movement, while at the same time deeming it their duty to endow the movement with a theory and a project, these Leninist groups usually took up the opposition culture of the workers' movement within the Fordist paradigm under a radicalized version (productivism, growth of purchasing

11. The "young Marx" can be recognized in these formulations (that of the *Communist Manifesto*), and even certain declarations of Mao at Yen-an. Now knowing what we do about the subsequent course of events, one can gauge the *practical* difficulty of putting these beautiful resolutions to work!

power, strengthening of the State, and so forth). This case is not unique in France's history: at the end of the nineteenth century, a portion of the socialist movement thought of itself as the left wing of the republican camp, and the Alternative movement has partially thought of itself as the "extreme Left," in other words, as "left of the Left" of the Fordist compromise.

Considerations about the "Convergence"

This brings us to the problem of the amalgamation of "green and red" within the Alternative movement, that is, the convergence between the workers' movement and "new social movements" (feminist and others). The illegitimate codification of May '68 in Marxist-Leninist organizations (in which the "Maoist-spontis" represented the least illegitimate variant) has engendered the separatism of other radical movements as an after effect. Feminism clearly has been the most radical movement, and without a doubt has most effectively brought about the crisis of the Leninist groups in the second half of the 1970s.

But it is with ecologists that misunderstandings with respect to the model of development have broken out most clearly and, unfortunately, under conditions that have brought about an absurd polarization (close to the "Jacobin Left/Second Left" polarization within the reformist Left). Marxist-Leninist sects are increasingly frozen within an internal critique of the Fordist compromise (an extreme Left critique, but internal to the compromise all the same). Their struggle against capitalist social relations alone is little by little restricting itself to a struggle for employment and income, indeed for an indexation of income. In response to this, ecologists reject the "production/consumption" pairing. Such a rejection has brought the ecology movement to think only about relations between humankind and nature, forgetting about social relations. Disputes over the model of production have tended to restrict themselves to a defense of Nature, assumed to be nonhumanized. The just battle against nuclear power and acid rain opposed to the no less just battle to maintain purchasing power symbolizes this divorce.

West German Greens have, at least partially, lessened this schism. This still remains to be done in France. Inheritors of the extreme Left's self-criticism are learning to rethink economic problems in terms of recasting social relations within the context of a critique of productivism. Ecologists are learning to think primarily in terms of an urban ecology, to place the social human being in the center of what there is to protect from the "havoc of progress," to think of nature modified by humankind as part of a system encompassing the human race. With respect to the feminist movement, which

has brought about the withdrawal of most of the female militants from mixed movements, it has languished as a political force since its legislative objectives were achieved (free abortion, etc.). Yet its aspirations have not receded to the same extent in the feminine population. (Unfortunately the same cannot be said for the political movements that have become "masculine" as a result of this withdrawal!) It still remains for feminism to re-enter the Alternative movement in order to manifest the feminist struggle's ability to "change life entirely."

More difficult than this will be joining with the "new generation," those of 1986. For young people the content of struggles is no longer lived via the mode of discourse or symbols. One is no longer "antiracist," rather "buddies [*potes*]" stick together. One is no longer "feminist," because it is thought that the "historical" generation of feminists has already obtained everything and that what remains is the business of personal practice. And so on. Opposition to the Right thus expresses itself in terms of "democratic radicalism," with the only reference being values of the Republic that were long thought to be engraved in a consensus opinion, and which raise indignation when they are not applied. "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"—no more, but nothing less. Political naiveté? Perhaps a perception of these "new values" as "normal values." If this is the case, if values which *at heart* are alternative are perceived as going without saying (thus, close to the definition of hegemonic values), then the Alternative's hope for hegemony presents itself under the best auspices.

Yet, how can several social movements, several currents of aspiration, be unified into a single will for change? Traditionally there have been two responses. The first presumes that in a given historical period a principal contradiction exists which opposes a principal social force having a defined project and the bearers of the former order. Thus, for traditional Marxism, revolution is one single movement, "proletarian, communist, and anticapitalist." Other social forces, with different but relatively compatible projects, may be associated with under the title of "allies." At the other extreme, and in general through a weakening of the notion of alliance, one is content with a "front of the discontented": workers, peasants, women, young people, and immigrants. A conglomeration which can only count in electoral ballots, under the auspices of a vanquishing party able to select what it can and wants to give to different discontented groups.

To take seriously the plurality of social contradictions and forms of oppression (capitalist exploitation, *sexage*, technocratic authoritarianism, racism, and so forth) implies rejecting the first solution. To take account of the intimate link between forms of oppression within one paradigm or one

unique model of development, to take account of the global changes necessary for realizing at least a part of the hopes of each within the new paradigm, carries with it rejection of the second solution. The only solution is thus to work towards the maturation of a "shared meaning [*sens commun*]," an alternative *culture*, that is, a rather general conception of what "the new world should be," so that each can recognize in it not only their own direct interests, but equally the interest that each has for others to find their interest there too. For example: the struggle for controlling technological progress only has meaning if women are not excluded from it, nor the multicultural young people in the suburbs, and so on. The movement for women's liberation only has meaning if wage labor and commodity relations become less alienating. Resolution of economic crisis must not aggravate the ecological crisis, and so on.

This has not been realized after 1968, *even though* the emergence of a popular anti-Taylorist workers' Left alongside student contestation of the "Consumer Society" seemed to conspire¹² towards a rejection of the Fordist model and towards the maturation of an alternative culture. It seems that the principal reason for failure should be sought in the immaturity of this culture throughout the 1970s, when the crisis of Fordism was introduced as an "outside factor," provoking the split between "defense of wage laborers' acquisitions" and other social movements.

However, confronted with both crisis of the Fordist model (whose definitive character is no longer doubted by anybody) and the threat of liberal productivism, social movements today are searching for a global response which can integrate their particular aspirations. The list of "Alternative ambitions" indicated above seems to spell out an implicit consensus, ripened from 1968 to today through periods of expansion as well as crisis. Today this consensus is searching for political expression. The bringing together of some of its expressions in the Rainbow [*Arc-en-Ciel*] movement,¹³ the split-

12. By design I have taken up a term chosen by Marilyn Ferguson (1980) for her book *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, signifying an "undersynthesis" (excluding such questions as that of work or racism!) which was realized by a part of the youth movement and American intelligentsia in the 1970s.

13. A call launched by individuals, isolated men and women or members of ecological, Alternative or self-management political groups, or by union members and nonviolent groups, and so forth, and which has structured itself in a diffuse and progressive manner, by towns and by themes, throughout 1987. In the autumn, however, it could not prevent the contest between two candidates for the presidential elections of April 1988: that of a right-wing ecologist candidate ("green-green") and that of a "communist reformer," Pierre Juquin, who was more representative, although imperfectly, of the Alternative convergence.

ting off of "reformers" within the French Communist Party, the sporadic appearance within the Socialist Party of tendencies more alternative than the "liberal productivist Left," all express the possibility for such a coming together along with its urgency.

Autonomy and Alliances

This brings us to the first problem that was pointed out: that of the relation of an Alternative movement to the rest of the political scene. For reasons already discussed, the Alternative pole, whether it wants to or not, has a privileged relation with progressive forces of the previous historical period (that is, with socialism). However, this relationship is not necessarily an external one. After all, the American Democratic Party has gone through several successive "historical compromises" in its history, without ever changing its name. The 1984 explosion between Mondale, Hart, and Jackson (incarnating more or less the Fordist, liberal productivist, and alternative paradigms) only illustrates the difficulty of this sort of transformation. Yet everyone remained within the Democratic Party.

In France things are different. Here parties with hegemonic ambitions have a secular life. Each new stratum of "progressivism" translates into the emergence of a new party, which feeds the relations of rivalry and influence with previous progressives, looking to include them in its own paradigm, all the while suspecting them of "treason" or of "taking over." This tradition is not without its tactical advantages: the Alternative paradigm cannot avoid having its "moderates" and "radicals." However, radicals alone cannot represent a current with majoritarian aims (except in exceptional situations). This was clearly shown by McGovern's experience in the American Democratic Party, as well as in Great Britain when the left wing dominated the Labour Party. In contrast, the coexistence of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Greens within the contemporary West German opposition seems to be richer in political possibilities.

Let it be well understood that in no way is this a question of a priori limiting the Alternative to acting as a spur for the old Left. The future Green-Alternative political force must take on the aim not only of gaining cultural hegemony but also, after awhile, of becoming the largest weight numerically within what will be the "progressive camp." Indeed, if the Alternative knows how to position itself as such, it should aim to put forth the political direction of this camp. The latter is a position that the French Communist Party was not able to occupy (despite having attained the first two objectives) and to which the Italian Communist Party can still hope to aspire.

But, from its beginnings, an Alternative pole necessarily plays both the role of a spur and that of a competitor to the old Left.

Probably the end of the 1980s will open up a situation of this sort in France. The choice will be difficult for those “defrauded by socialism,” just as for the reformers within the Communist Party. Having gotten over the initial disappointments of the March 1986 elections, they will now have to make a choice between the strategy of “internal rebirth” within the old parties and that of building a new candidacy for political representation. Naturally the Unified Socialist Party’s failure¹⁴ will be thrown in our faces, forgetting that the schism at Tours in 1920 did finally engender a party (the French CP) larger than the existing socialist party, the French Section of the Workers’ International (SFIO). The SFIO itself became a small grouping by 1969, and owes its welfare to the merger with the confederation of clubs led by François Mitterand, which marked the beginning of the current Socialist Party.

As can be seen with respect to the recomposition of political parties, the tradition in the French political arena is in total contrast to that of the American system. The choice is not between “leave on your own or struggle from within” (“exit, voice, and loyalty,” as Albert Hirschman would say). New political forces are born by splits in the old and by merging these schisms with the new.

But this is not the important point. There will always be some “pro-Alternatives” within the Socialist Party. Without a doubt some will even remain in the Communist Party after the reformers leave. But this Alternative sensitivity within the parties of the old paradigm will not have any chance to express itself if an Alternative pole acting as an autonomous force does not exist outside these parties. Or still: according to whether or not an Alternative political force exists as an expression of real social movements, the Socialist Party will either become the moderate wing of the Alternative or the “humanitarian” wing of liberal productivism.

14. The Unified Socialist Party [*Parti Socialiste Unifié*, PSU] was created at the start of the 1960s by secessionists from the French Section of the Workers’ International [*Section Française de l’Internationale Ouvrière*—SFIO—the old French Socialist Party—Trans.], former members of the French Communist Party, and militants of the “new Left” of that period. The PSU was never able to supplant the historical parties of the workers’ movement, the SFIO and the CP, which arose out of the split at Tours [in 1920—Trans.]. Its most well-known leader, Michel Rocard, joined the Socialist Party [shortly after its founding in 1972—Trans.], and was followed progressively by a majority of the militants from the PSU.

But let us leave these political considerations. Today, and in the margin of Mitterand's and Chirac's cohabitation games, the Alternative movement's priority is the elaboration, the ideological unification, and the rebuilding of a social project, along with involvement in the tough social battles which have come with the strong return of the Right. For some time there will necessarily be a coexistence between critical currents within the old Left (and what still remains of the old extreme Left) and within outside Alternative poles which are more or less radical, more red than green or more green than red. Also there will be, hopefully, bridges between these positions.

The first step towards "another way of doing politics" is the rejection of sectarianism and prejudgments.

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