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The Student-Worker Crisis in France May-June, 1968

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THE STUDENT-WORKER CRISIS IN FRANCE

MAY-JUNE, 1968

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

By

John Bingham Munroe

February, 1970



APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to compare the reaction by the French and the French-Canadian press to the student riots and the labor strike in France in May and June, 1968. The hypothesis was tested in this study was that the editorial comment in the French and French-Canadian newspapers would be similar because Quebec Province and France share a common heritage and language.

Three areas in this period of disorders were examined. They were, first, the student revolt and its causes; second, the worker strike; and third, President de Gaulle and the parliamentary elections in June, 1968. Reaction to the outbreaks by the students was similar in France as in Quebec, although the reason was not due to their common language and heritage. Some papers were sympathetic with the students and some with the police and French government. There were five main causes for the revolt according to the press: (1) the activity of the ultra-leftist student groups (the "groupuscules"), (2) a feeling of alienation from the university on the part of the student, (3) the students' desire to participate in the operation of the university, (4) the boredom the students felt because of their situation as students, and (5) the immediate cause, the invasion of the Sorbonne by the police on May 3, 1968.

Reaction by the French and French-Canadian press was also similar concerning the labor strike. Both presses were generally pro-labor and discussed the roles of the French government and the French Communist Party in the strike.

In the third area, reaction to de Gaulle was mixed in the French press but was strongly negative in the Canadian press, which had its own reasons for disliking de Gaulle. This reaction stemmed from a speech made by de Gaulle in which he called for the liberation of Quebec from Canada. Both presses were satisfied with the results of the parliamentary elections in which the Gaullists won an overwhelming victory at the expense of the leftist parties because this meant a return to normal for France.

The results suggested that the hypothesis was not valid, because in areas where reaction of the two presses was similar, it was for reasons other than lingual or cultural that the two shared. Concerning General de Gaulle, the reaction was different because of negative feeling created as a result of de Gaulle's Quebec liberation speech of July, 1967.

THE REACTION OF THE FRENCH AND THE FRENCH CANADIAN PRESS TO THE
STUDENT-WORKER CRISIS IN FRANCE, MAY-JUNE, 1968

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In May and June, 1968, France suffered a social and economic collapse the likes of which had not been experienced in over one hundred and fifty years. Not since the invasion of the Nazis in 1940 did Frenchmen talk of the "death of a civilization" as they did in May and June, 1968. However this was a foreign and a military tragedy. One must go back in history to the days of the French Revolution to find a comparable breakdown of a social and economic order.

During the early days of May, France was shaken by the student riots which took place first in Paris and then spread quickly to other French cities. After days and nights of anarchy and destruction the revolt spread to the working class. By the third week of May the number of workers on strike approached ten million and France was totally paralyzed.

It is therefore the object of this study to examine a crisis of the magnitude of this one which shook French higher education from which it took its genesis. Because France and Quebec share a common language and heritage, this study attempted to compare and contrast the reaction of the French press to that of the French-Canadian press as shown particularly by their editorial comment as well as the extent and treatment of news items.

Four French and three French Canadian daily newspapers were used. They are as follows:

<u>French</u>	<u>French Canadian</u>
<u>Le Monde</u> , Paris	<u>Le Soleil</u> , Quebec
<u>Le Figaro</u> , Paris	<u>Le Devoir</u> , Montreal
<u>France-Soir</u> , Paris	<u>La Presse</u> , Montreal
<u>L'Humanite</u> , Paris	

The French Canadian newspapers used in this study were selected on the basis of circulation, these enjoying the largest circulation of dailies in French Canada. The French papers were chosen because they are by far the best known and most widely read dailies in France.

The hypothesis that this study tested was that the reaction of these French and French Canadian dailies to the "events of May" were similar because Quebec (province) and France share a common heritage and language, that their common blood is thicker than the water that separates them. In pursuit of determining the validity of this hypothesis, the author considered the reactions of the press in the two countries to the following questions regarding the crisis of 1968: (1) How was the student movement in France (and elsewhere in the world) viewed? What were the causes of the revolt? (2) What was the reaction to the worker strike that followed? (3) How large a part did the personality of General de Gaulle play in the crisis? Was it a crisis of civilization and government's inability to maintain order? (4) What was the meaning of and reaction to the parliamentary elections in June, 1968, which were brought on by the crisis? (5) How much did the political philosophy of each newspaper affect its treatment of the news and its editorial comment

exclusive of any lingual or national considerations? (6) How do the Canadians view their situation as being affected by the situation in France (Canada at that time was in the midst of its own parliamentary elections and the candidate for the labor party was a French Canadian, Pierre Elliott Trudeau)? Is there something in the nature of the French that would make them more prone to this form of social upheaval than the Canadians?

To assist the reader in following the succession of events during this period the researcher has provided this chronology.

Chronology of Events

The scholastic year 1967-'68 at the faculty of Letters at Nanterre, a suburb north of Paris, was marked by demonstrations and student unrest. Led by the German born student leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a group of leftist students (the Movement of March 22) harassed the school administration and disrupted the university in their demand for reform of the faculty at Nanterre which, like the University of Paris and others, is but one campus of the national University of France which is administered by the Ministry of Education in Paris.

Friday, May 3 Because of the continuing student unrest the dean closes the Faculty of Letters at Nanterre. That afternoon sympathetic students meet in the courtyard of the Sorbonne in Paris. The police enter the courtyard and expel them and violence and rioting are touched off in the Latin Quarter (student section of Paris).

- Monday, May 6 Classes are suspended at the Sorbonne for the first time in its long history.
- Friday, May 10 The first night of the barricades is passed in the Latin Quarter.
- Monday, May 13 A general 24 hour strike is held by the workers to show their support for the students' cause. The students "take" the Sorbonne.
- Thursday, May 16 The first state-owned Renault car factory is occupied by its workers.
- Saturday, May 18 General de Gaulle cuts short a visit to Rumania to return to Paris and deal with a steadily worsening domestic situation.
- Wednesday, May 22 The National Assembly rejects a motion of censure put forward by two leftist parties, the French Communist Party (PCF) and the Federation of the Left (FGDS), in an attempt to bring down the Gaullist government.
- Friday, May 24 In a TV address de Gaulle announces a referendum for reform, to be interpreted as a mandate for his remaining in power. Later that night the worst riots yet sweep across France as the students and workers register their generally negative reaction to the speech.
- Saturday, May 25 Round the clock negotiations are started between government, industry, and union spokesmen to bring an end to the strike which at this point has about 10 million adherents out of a general population of 45 million, and the country is totally paralysed.

Wednesday, May 29 Amid rumors of an imminent resignation de Gaulle quietly leaves Paris for his home at Colombay-les-Deux-Eglises.

Thursday, May 30 In a dramatic coup de Théâtre de Gaulle appears on television and calls for new elections, kicking off his anti-Communist campaign. Army units are placed on the outskirts of Paris in the event that the situation gets out of hand. This speech is taken as the high water mark of the crisis after which the situation slowly begins to improve.

Saturday, June 1 There is a massive pro-de Gaulle rally on the Champs-Élysées with an estimated one million demonstrators.

Friday, June 7 In a televised interview de Gaulle explains his plan for worker "participation" which is supposed to be different from both capitalism and communism as a solution to the country's economic problems.

Wednesday, June 12 The government puts a ban on all demonstrations until the end of the electoral campaign.

Sunday, June 16 The Sorbonne "falls" to the police.

Sunday, June 23 In the first round of the parliamentary elections the gaullist party (UDR) finishes strong.

Sunday, June 30 In the second round of the parliamentary elections the UDR had won itself a majority of the seats in the National Assembly. For the first time in the history of France as a Republic, one party has more than 50% of the seats in the Assembly.

CHAPTER II

CAUSES OF THE STUDENT REVOLT

The year 1968 was a year of world-wide student ferment and unrest. From Moscow to Madrid, Harvard to Nanterre, East and West, few were spared the sight of angry young men and women attacking the traditions and institutions of the Established Order -- the bourgeois State -- which had become insensitive to the needs and problems of the student population. Some felt mild contempt concerning the disorders on American campuses in 1968. "French students have more important demands to make than the right to visit girls in their dormitory rooms."¹

Of course the issues involved were more serious and subtle than this remark would indicate. However the problems in French universities were much more serious and profound than those across the Atlantic or anywhere else in the world. They touched off a chain of events that led a year later to the resignation of the French president.

In discussing the events of May the French and the French Canadian press discussed five main causes and one immediate cause of the student revolution. First, French universities have numerous ultra-left wing organizations, groupuscules, which were

¹ Editorial, Le Monde (Paris), May 8, 1968, p.7.

opposed to the goals of the university whose function to them was to train the cadres for a bourgeois society which exploits the working class. Their objective was not only the destruction of the university as it existed but also of society itself. An interesting point about these groups is that they embody the revolutionary doctrines of Marx, Lenin, Mao, Castro, and others; yet they were feared and hated by the French Communist Party (PCF) for reasons that will be discussed later. The largest nest of these groupuscules could be found at the Faculty of Letters at Nanterre where the revolt took its roots. According to a writer in Le Monde these agitators believed that

The students are nothing less than the future exploiters of a bourgeois society and its parasites. The symbol of this participation of the University [in the exploitation] is the diploma and the exams which lead to it. (2)

In Le Devoir (Montreal) it was written, "it seems to [the students] that changes made in the past have no other justification than to adapt the University to the needs of big business."³

La Presse (Montreal) took an unsympathetic view of these student groups. "The Minister of National Education, Mr. Alain Peyrofitte, has in our humble opinion expressed the most lucid explanation of this disquieting phenomenon. 'Among the students there are ORGANIZED AGITATORS steeped in the technique of urban guerrilla warfare...'"⁴ And L'Humanité (Paris), the official

² Editorial, Le Monde (Paris), May 7, 1968, p. 10.

³ Editorial, Le Devoir (Montreal), May 18, 1968, p. 7.

⁴ Editorial, La Presse (Montreal), Roger Champoux, May 11, 1968, p. 4.

paper of the PCF saw these groups as presenting a clear danger to students in their quest for legitimate reform in the French University.

A second reason for the revolt, according to the French and Canadian press, was a feeling of boredom on the part of the students. They had everything given to them and did not have any higher ideal to turn their energies and interests to. Thus when events started to move they saw this as something to do, something to relieve the boredom. In an article in La Monde, P. L. Reynaud wrote, "It is because the great mass of students live in lethargy facing the tension of contemporary life that a revolutionary movement led to surge and capture the attention [of the students]." ⁵ Later La Monde wrote, "Apathy of the great mass of students is real but the awakening can be rude." ⁶ Students want significance for their lives, a cause to believe in that is bigger than themselves. "Well-being is not happiness." ⁷

The Canadian press expressed the same sentiment.

It is very probable that the so-called capitalist world is... a victim of its prosperity... abundance results in boredom. Our students... are torn between their scorn of 'immediate satisfactions' which are not sufficient to give life meaning and their desire to be assured by the world of a longer range security. (8)

⁵Editorial, La Monde (Paris), P. L. Reynaud, May 8, 1968, p. 12.

⁶Editorial, La Monde (Paris), Gaussen and Herzlich, May 9, 1968, p. 6.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Editorial, La Presse (Montreal), Jean Mehling, June 17, 1968, p. 20.

The insecurity that they felt at this particular time was heightened by the fact that in a few weeks' time they were to sit for their final examinations which carry a great deal of importance for the French students since their whole academic career depends on how well they do on these examinations. Thus the tensions and anxieties produced by the fateful upcoming examinations contributed to an already tense situation.

On these first two points the French and Canadian press were in agreement. There was little in the French press on the third cause although later in the crisis the French began to write more about it in terms of university reform rather than causes of the revolt. As stated in the introductory chapter all French universities are part of the one University of France which is administered by the Minister of National Education in Paris, with the result that power and authority are highly centralized. Also, the French University system is old. The Sorbonne for instance dates back to the thirteenth century when it was used as a residence for divinity students studying in Paris. Because the University was so centralized and so little interested in changing traditions established over hundreds of years, the students felt alienated from the University.

The press felt that this feeling of alienation, the third cause, had increased in the preceding ten years when the University greatly increased its size, enlarging existing campuses and creating new ones such as the Faculty of Letters at Nanterre. In Le Devoir a French Canadian student studying at Nanterre gave the following

impressions of his life in this campus. "... I never cease being troubled by the life I live each day here at Nanterre."⁹ He describes the town of Nanterre, a slum for Bicots (North African Arabs), which completely surrounds the educational institution with poverty and discontent. There were no movie houses, no recreation centers, and no cafes where the students could gather and talk. So oppressive were the surroundings that it is no wonder that many of them spent their time planning revolution. Concerning the Faculty of Letters, "... you come to take your courses a little as you would take a pill and then you return home."¹⁰

Twenty years ago it was easy for a professor and his students to maintain a dialogue of equality since the universities and hence the classes were smaller and there was more opportunity for contact and closer relations between students and teachers. Today mass society requires mass education with the result that the student, instead of taking an active part in his education, has been reduced to a passive consumer of knowledge. The dialogue between the teacher and the taught has been sacrificed in the attempt to educate greater masses of people, and no new means of communication has risen to take its place.¹¹

As in other countries the students want a voice in the management of the university, which is the fourth cause. They want each local

⁹ Editorial, Le Devoir (Montreal), Georges Gustavi, May 10, 1968, p. 4

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Editorial, Le Monde (Paris), Robert Escarpit, May 18, 1968, p. 1.

campus to be more autonomous from the Ministry in Paris and they want more of a say in matters that directly concern them.

... is not one of the causes of the revolt of the students in France the very undemocratic character of the University? ... far from wanting to be considered as an elite they are fighting for the democratization of the University. One would want the students to recognize and accept themselves as an elite while they are fighting precisely to no longer be considered as such.

(12)

The students were considered as an intellectual elite and as children at the same time.

What is even more intolerable than the material conditions is the paternalism and the disinterest with regards to the university world. The young no longer accept being treated as if they did not have either ideas or opinions that had any worth; in brief, they will no longer accept the best rules in the world so long as they are dictated from up above.

(13)

The Canadians do not consider this problem of an over-centralization of power as a problem in their universities. Le Devoir saw the French problem in this respect as being strictly French. "In France, the malaise stems largely from the excessive centralization and the administrative authoritarianism which regulates the functioning of the universities."¹⁴ Disagreeing with Peyrefitte, the Education Minister, Le Devoir did not see how a small group of organized agitators was able to disrupt the universities and instigate 30,000 students to riot if the situation described above did not exist.

¹² Editorial, Le Devoir (Montreal), Michel Morin and Jean-Robert Primeau, May 23, 1968, p. 5.

¹³ Editorial, Le Devoir (Montreal), Charles Taylor, June 6, 1968, p. 5.

¹⁴ Editorial, Le Devoir (Montreal), Claude Ryan, May 22, 1968, p. 4.

A fifth factor why there was a revolt in the university was that many students, especially those in the social sciences, languages, etc., felt insecure about their future. They feared not being able to find employment on leaving the university because their field was too saturated and they could not be absorbed into a technological society. France needed scientists and businessmen more than it needed teachers, philosophers, and the like. Furthermore, the revolt and subsequent boycott of examinations received the support of the students because they felt that if they did not take the exams they would not be able to leave school and go out into the world to look for the jobs that did not exist. Thus by boycotting their exams they would be able to prolong their status as students indefinitely. Le Soleil (Quebec) saw this fear of unemployment for the students of the social sciences.

If the goals are not too clear and seen at the moment to reveal an anarchism colored by romanticism, the motives are more precise. Under a clumsy, excessive, and contradictory expression one can feel the all too real agony of a generation that is more and more worried about its future. The students of science, on the other hand, do not have this worry. They will be able to find jobs. (15)

An answer to this problem for the students would be to enroll instead in science courses and not in humanities courses. However, this was repugnant to them because then they would be more easily used by a capitalist society for which they felt so much contempt. This was the crux of the problem for many.

¹⁵ Editorial, Le Soleil, (Quebec), May 14, 1968, p. 27.

They feel crushed by this society. Like the population of Hanoi by the American bombardments. Or the under-developed countries of Latin America by American capitalism. Their fight against this world, they think, is the same as that of the people of Viet Nam or Latin American guerrillas. Their heroes are Ho Chi Minh and Che Guevara. (16)

These then were some of the deep rooted causes of the student bomb that exploded on the afternoon and evening of May 3 in the Latin Quarter of Paris. It was on this afternoon that a group of about 500 students met in the court yard of the Sorbonne to discuss the events of that week which saw the arrest of three students from Nanterre on the grounds of disturbing the peace and trespassing (which meant hurling obscenities and insults at the dean and invading a classroom where a class was already in session and thereby disrupting it). These three were to be brought to court the following Monday, and the purpose of the meeting in the Sorbonne was to reach agreement on some kind of action to show their support for their comrades. Reports conflict as to whether or not this was a peaceful meeting. The students contended that it was and the police that it was not, but none of the newspapers took a position on this point. However, they all agreed on what happened next, which was the immediate cause of the revolt. Toward the end of the meeting the police entered and forcibly removed those taking part. Once outside the walls of the Sorbonne the word of what had happened quickly spread and that night the Latin Quarter suffered its first night of riots.

¹⁶Editorial, Le Devoir (Montreal), Jacques Duquesne, June 17, 1968, p. 1.

Reaction in the press in Canada and in France was similar. "It is without a doubt the occupation of the old faculty [the Sorbonne] -- and the arrests that followed -- that provoked the rallying of large numbers of students until that time indifferent to the revolt and the protest movement."¹⁷ France-Soir agreed with Le Figaro in its reaction. "...This intervention by the security forces has brought ten thousand students out into the streets who perhaps would not have responded... to the appeals of the 'enragés'."¹⁸ Le Monde also sided with the students. "If the extremists are only a handful, the recourse to the police to put them down has provoked a large movement of solidarity among the students."¹⁹ Le Monde called attention to the fact that the Sorbonne down through the ages has been a sanctuary for those seeking its protection for political reasons. With the invasion of the Sorbonne by the police, "... The old privilege of impunity in the walls of the University is falling into disuse..."²⁰ Le Devoir also laid the blame for the disturbances on the action of the police. The invasion of the Sorbonne by the police "... was the mistake which released the whole mechanism. This entry by the police into the sanctuary of the University... provoked the solidarity [of the students]." ²¹

¹⁷ Editorial, Le Figaro (Paris), L. G.-R., May 13, 1968, p. 4.

¹⁸ Editorial, France-Soir, (Paris), Jean Feriot, May 8, 1968, p. 4.

¹⁹ Editorial, Le Monde (Paris), May 8, 1968, p. 7.

²⁰ Editorial, Le Monde (Paris), Thierry Pfister, May 8, 1968, p. 12.

²¹ Le Devoir (Montreal), Jacques Duquesne, June 17, 1968, p. 1.

Although the French and the Canadian press found similar causes for the revolt in its opening days, the Canadian press discussed the more underlying causes of the revolt, the conditions existing in France which led to it. The French, perhaps because they were living this experience, were more preoccupied with the single act of the police invasion of the Sorbonne. Both presses were generally sympathetic to the students and their cause for reform of the University. But, however sympathetic the Canadians were to the plight of the French student, their fear of the same thing taking place in Quebec was not great. They felt that the conditions that existed in the French University before the riots did not exist in Quebec. Therefore there was no great concern on their part for the possibility of similar events occurring in their universities. As the crisis developed and the disorder became more widespread, the unanimity of the French and Canadian press no longer held.

CHAPTER III

THE STUDENT REVOLT

Briskly... about twenty policemen penetrate the cafe with nothing having provoked this intervention. Very soon one can hear groans and cries. Then I see young people coming out all doubled up. (1)

A Negro is hustled into a waiting police wagon. He does not look harmed, but when he is brought back out he is lying on a stretcher covered with blood. "I suppose that the color of his skin merited his being 'taken care of' in the interior of the van!"² This is an eye-witness account of what happened in the early days of the student disorders at a particular cafe that students in the Latin Quarter frequented. "I saw several people coming up out of the subway... who were not demonstrators, struck in the face."³ These last two passages were taken from Le Monde which generally sided with the students and against the police in their confrontations.

The researcher was present at one of these confrontations toward the latter part of June, 1968, and he can attest to the severity of the police reaction to the disorders. Although he received a rifle butt in the back and a scrape on the arm in one particular melee, the researcher makes no attempt to say that these assaults were or were not justified.

¹ Editorial, Le Monde (Paris), Le Guen, May 9, 1968, p. 6.

² Ibid.

³ Editorial, Le Monde (Paris), May 7, 1968, p. 10.

The French press however found little justification in the way the police conducted themselves. The brutality of the police amassed public opinion on the side of the students. "Brutality, added to force, law flouted by those who would have it respected; these are the disorders that lead to more disorders."⁴ "There were acts of excessive brutality on the part of the police. Passers-by as well as women doing their shopping were beaten up."⁵ L'Humanité, the official newspaper of the PCF, was even more vehement in its condemnation of the police action. In an official declaration of the French Communist Party L'Humanité wrote, "The French Communist Party condemns this fierce and excessive repression and expresses the indignant protest of the workers, the intellectuals, the young people."⁶

It was apparent to the press that these riots had taken the police by surprise. As a result the police over-reacted when the students first took to the streets. When they felt the tremendous public reaction against the way they had handled the students they pulled back just as the students were getting their second wind. The result was even more violence and destruction. In rapid succession there was the "first night of the barricades", Friday, May 10, followed by the twenty-four hour worker strike, the

⁴Editorial, Le Monde (Paris), "The Difficult Path", Alfred Grosser, May 15, 1968, p. 1.

⁵Le Monde (Paris), May 9, 1968, p. 7.

⁶L'Humanité (Paris, May 10, 1968, p. 11.

student-worker march across Paris, and the occupation of the Sorbonne by the students on the following Monday, May 13.

First the police reacted too strongly to the student disorders, then seemed to hesitate before the youthful onslaught. As a result they suffered in the public's reaction. Le Monde gave its definition of the kind of authority it thought necessary in this situation. "The best kind of authority is that kind that does not have to resort to sanctions to make itself respected. But the possibility of a sanction must exist."⁷ And in order that this sanction may never be used it must be a legitimate one.

Diametrically opposed to the police and law and order in general were the groupuscules, the left-wing anarchists who would destroy the whole bourgeois society to build their "people's democracy". The foremost of the groupuscules was the Movement of March 22, created on that date at Nanterre by Daniel Cohn-Bendit, who took the leadership of all the students in revolt. Cohn-Bendit was the artilleryman who set off the powder keg at the Sorbonne which set off the explosion of Paris, and then of all France."⁸ He was born of German parents who had fled to France to escape the madness of Hitler. After the war the parents returned to Germany, but Daniel remained in France, later to enroll in the Faculty of Letters at Nanterre, where his career as a student revolutionary began. One of his first confrontations with the

⁷ Le Monde (Paris), Grosser, May 15, 1968, p. 7.

⁸ La Presse (Montreal), May 29, 1968, p. 5.

school authorities took place at the dedication of a newly built pool at the Faculty (school) of Letters at Nanterre. As La Presse recounted it, "... he blamed the [school] authorities... for not doing anything about the sexual problems of the students. The minister counseled the boy to jump into the pool to regulate... his sexual problems. A not too affable exchange followed."⁹

Cohn-Bendit had strong political beliefs that he sought to impose on others. "To strike down those who do not agree," wrote Le Figaro, "that is the principal argument of this defender of democracy."¹⁰

Paraphrasing one of his remarks Le Soleil concluded, "There exists only one democracy (for Cohn-Bendit); that of the street."¹¹

Le Monde did not take such a negative view of Cohn-Bendit and his ilk. It was able to see a new and better university rising from the revolt that spread from these small groups to the student body at large. Although their means of expression were often excessive, "... the dreamers of Nanterre are speaking a language that the others [the students] seem to understand."¹² Raymond Aron, formerly a sociology professor at the Sorbonne, was fearful of what these groups represented and what they were doing. The public did not realize the seriousness of the crisis. A small minority was in the process of succeeding in an operation of

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Le Figaro (Paris), J.P., May 10, 1968, p. 4.

¹¹ Le Soleil (Quebec), May 17, 1968, p. 27.

¹² Le Monde (Paris), May 7, 1968, p. 10.

of subversion that cabinet ministers, parents, teachers, and students refused to understand.¹³ These so-called student reform groups were not representative of anyone but themselves, and the teachers and the Ministry of Education should challenge their authority to speak for all students. "May every student, every teacher who experiences my fear and shares my hopes, try to convince his friends. May everyone be mobilized in a final crusade of reason."¹⁴ This terrorist subversion had to be stopped.

L'Humanité was placed in a difficult position by the activities of the groupuscules. Conventionally L'Humanité occupied the far left of the political spectrum. One would expect L'Humanité to take the lead in the fight against a bourgeois capitalistic society; however this Communist newspaper was completely taken by surprise and was passed on its left by the groupuscules that were in fact more revolutionary than it was. L'Humanité condemned the activities of these Marxist-Leninist groups as endangering the interests of the students and workers. In an article entitled "False Revolutionaries to Unmask" Georges Marchais wrote, "As always when the union of democratic and worker forces progresses, the left-wing groupuscules agitate everywhere. These false revolutionaries must be energetically unmasked because... they are only serving the interests of the Gaullist power and the great capitalistic monopolies."¹⁵ And later L'Humanité

¹³ Editorial, Le Figaro (Paris), "The University Crisis", Raymond Aron, June 11, 1968, p. 1.

¹⁴ Editorial, Le Figaro (Paris), Raymond Aron, June 13, 1968, p. 13.

¹⁵ L'Humanité (Paris), Georges Marchais, May 3, 1968, p. 1.

wrote, "... we must fight and completely isolate all the left-wing groupuscules which are trying to hurt the democratic movement by covering themselves in revolutionary phraseology."¹⁶ It felt that the demands made by the students were legitimate but their actions only favored the groupuscules whose interests had nothing in common with those of the students at large.

On May 8, the IPOP (French Institute of Public Opinion) conducted a poll for France-Soir to determine whether Parisians approved or disapproved of the student demands and who they thought were responsible for the disorders. Below are the results of that poll.

80%	Approve of the students' demands
12%	Disapprove
8%	No opinion
25%	Students are responsible for the riots
20%	Police are responsible
15%	The Ministry of Education is responsible
14%	The university is responsible
13%	Other
13%	No opinion

In the same article in which these figures appeared Jean Periot wrote, "The student... appears like a romantic character, unjustly crushed by an inhuman social and economic machine."¹⁷ If the public did not like what the students are doing, they at least understand the motivation for the students' behavior.

Le Monde was generally sympathetic to the students. During one of the earlier demonstrations, "... the demonstrators, who

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ France-Soir (Paris), Jean Periot, May 10, 1968, p. 4.

advance calmly, without even chanting slogans, are surprised by a very strong police charge."¹⁸ Sometimes it is enthusiastic. "May thanks be given to the 'terrible jolt', the student revolt, since it had opened the eyes of a lot of people, particularly those of General de Gaulle."¹⁹

All those who concern themselves with the future of humanism can only rejoice in seeing a group of young people rise up and get enthusiastic over Cohn-Bendit rather than Johnny Hallyday [a popular French singer], over barricades rather than Olympia [a music hall in Paris where Johnny Hallyday sings]. (20)

Raymond Barrillon of Le Monde approved of the revolt but only so long as the students did not go too far. "They are not wrong to denounce the misdeeds of a consumption society, but they should not lose sight of the fact that this same society opens the door to a better world and a material world less deplorable for a good number of their 'worker friends'".²¹

L'Humanité also supported the students' cause but with reservations. The student malaise had legitimate reasons which the Communist Party had always supported, but,

¹⁸Le Monde (Paris), K. Christitch and J. P. Quenlin, May 8, 1968, p. 8.

¹⁹Le Monde (Paris), Jacques Fauvet, June 10, 1968, p. 1.

²⁰Editorial, Le Monde (Paris), "A cultural Revolution, Yes, But Which One?", Jean le Veugle, May 23, 1968, p. 9.

²¹Editorial, Le Monde (Paris), "A Lucid Folly", Raymond Barrillon, May 17, 1968, p. 4.

...being revolutionary does not mean playing with riots. It means working to bring about great changes which will permit the democratic university to be built.. it means preparing the victory of their cause by linking their battle to that of all workers, all democrats.

(22)

In the Canadian press only Le Devoir was sympathetic with the students. "It is not possible and it would be without a doubt dangerous to reduce this phenomenon to an explosion of folly or to see in it the work of only a handful of agitators."²³ Writing in the May 17 edition of Le Devoir Alain Touraine wrote,

The student movement is important because it goes beyond a banal request for participation in the management of social action or study groups. It concerns a movement.. which is putting a decision and management system in question and not just the forms of organisation.

(24)

There was much in the press of both countries that was negative concerning the students. "In this business about the examinations (which the students were boycotting) the students who are revolting have touched off a bomb that could go off in their hands."²⁵ The taking of the Sorbonne and the blocking of the examinations was beginning to turn a once sympathetic public against them. "...without the support of public opinion, ... abandoned by most of their teachers, the students risk losing the benefit of a positive action (agreeing to sit for the examinations) by an ill-considered gesture."²⁶

²² L'Humanité (Paris), Georges Bouvard, May 5, 1968, p. 4.

²³ Editorial, Le Devoir (Montreal), May 16, 1968, p. 9.

²⁴ Le Devoir (Montreal), Alain Touraine, May 17, 1968, p. 7.

²⁵ Editorial, France-Soir (Paris), "The Silent Onea Make Themselves Heard", Jean Ferlot, May 17, 1968, p. 4.

²⁶ Ibid.

In Le Figaro Jean Papillon wrote, "... it is sad to see that a thousand young people in revolt can block the university machine."²⁷ That this number of students could stop the university showed that the administration did not expect such a reaction and had made no preparation to face it. "Why don't some responsible students -- those who want to build -- attempt to reopen the dialogue, today even, rather than having the billy clubs do all the talking?"²⁸

Raymond Aron in Le Figaro thought that certain student and teacher unions had exploited the situation. The revolt was not spontaneous in view of a university reform; it was launched by the Movement of March 22 and other groupuscules who were not interested in reform, but only in causing trouble.²⁹

...how is it that this ardent and anguished youth
 ...let themselves be carried away... by individuals
 whose goals, alas! are only too well known and who...
 are doing their best to murder France and scoff at all
 that is honorable in a democracy? (30)

Another writer, also writing in Le Figaro, waved the bloody shirt. The old do not understand the young's lack of patriotism. Men died in two World Wars so that the young revolutionaries could be born in a free country and this country should be preserved and

²⁷ Le Figaro (Paris), Jean Papillon, May 4, 1968, p. 10.

²⁸ Editorial, Le Figaro (Paris), "University Breakdown", Jean Papillon, May 6, 1968, p. 1.

²⁹ Editorial, Le Figaro (Paris), "Conclusions and Propositions", Raymond Aron, June 19, 1968, p. 1.

³⁰ Le Figaro (Paris), Jean Papillon, May 9, 1968, p. 1.

defended. "Today when we see this fatherland systematically ravaged and ruined... we can not help thinking about all those who in the past gave their lives to safeguard it..."³¹

The Canadian press also reacted negatively to what was going on with the students in France. "It is difficult to see how these brawls will help the student cause in the immediate future,"³² was how Le Soleil saw the situation. La Presse had some comments to make, sometimes with tongue in cheek. "If you want to be sure of seeing a show, you ought to go to the Latin Quarter where the students are masters only after God."³³ In the Odeon theater in the Latin Quarter, which students held, "... plays [are] improvised on the theme, 'How to Remake the World', shown in a decor of red flags. Admission, free, twenty-four hours a day."³⁴ In a more serious vein La Presse thought that the students still had the support of public opinion in their demands but the public was beginning to tire of their slowness in coming up with a constructive program. "If this situation is prolonged... it could produce a sudden change in public opinion in favor of the government, which moreover has shown itself disposed to satisfy..."

³¹ Editorial, Le Figaro (Paris), "Distressed Fatherland", Gen. Beaufré, June 14, 1968, p. 12.

³² Editorial, Le Soleil (Quebec), "Violence in Paris", May 8, 1968, p. 4.

³³ Editorial, La Presse (Montreal), "Better Not Go to Paris", May 21, 1968, p. 1.

³⁴ Ibid.

the students' demands concerning their participation in a profound reform of the university."³⁵ In an editorial a few days later La Presse wrote, "On the ruins of the bourgeois State which has opened the doors to free university education for most of them, it would be interesting to know what they plan on building. This preoccupies them little enough, for they do not even know themselves. What seems to interest them first of all is destroying."³⁶

The serious students... have better things to do than to go down into the streets. The majority... thinks it scandalous, this furor, subtly ignited then maintained by the leaders who have their own reasons to create... disorder and chaos... An investigation conducted in Paris reveals that [many of] the leaders ...are foreigners, including Americans... These students are unhappy... but why? Because they are an elite? Because they have remarkable masters? Because they will have to face difficult problems? There will be some for them just as there were for us; life does not change... Fortunately, there are real students! They work in silence, for, knowing that they have a rendez-vous with destiny, they are preparing to say 'Present!' (37)

The idea of a fading nationalism of the part of the French student was commented on in La Presse and was linked to the Communist movement. "If [the students] sang the 'International', it is because they condemn nationalism... It seems to me that for the majority of the French students national boundaries have less and significance... Communism again has its big chance."³⁸

³⁵ La Presse (Montreal), May 17, 1968, p. 1.

³⁶ Editorial, La Presse (Montreal), "France Paralyzed", Cyrille Felteau, May 21, 1968, p. 6.

³⁷ Editorial, La Presse (Montreal), "Running a High Temperature", Roger Champoux, May 11, 1968, p. 4.

³⁸ Editorial, La Presse (Montreal), "The French Student and Nationalism", Jean Mehling, June 13, 1968, p. 31.

If La Presse came out strongly against the students it was equally critical of the way the government was handling the situation. It was, after all, the Minister of National Education that had asked the police to intervene at the meeting in the court yard of the Sorbonne on May 3. The students and the two largest student unions, the UNEF (National Union of Students of France) and the SNESup (National Union of Higher Education) made three demands to the government that would have to be met before they would sit down and negotiate. These were:

1. The police leave the Sorbonne and its environs.
2. All those students arrested during the riots be released.
3. Classes start again in the Sorbonne.

The government took a hard line on these demands and was criticized for taking such an uncompromising position. La Presse in a headline story concluded, "... most observers today think that the government has come out on the losing side in its confrontation with the students... The authorities are largely responsible for the riots on the night of Friday to Saturday [May 10-11, the first night of the barricades]... which could have been avoided if they had taken some measures of appeasement in time..."³⁹ A month later, however, La Presse made an about-face, putting the blame for the continuance of the unrest on the students. During the first scuffles public opinion was on the side of the students and the

³⁹ La Presse (Montreal), May 13, 1968, p. 1.

situation was not taken too seriously. But little by little what was going on appeared to be more than youthful exuberance. "This State, denounced by its enemies as being a 'police State' directed by a clique of assassins, has shown a remarkable aptitude for tolerance during the last five weeks."⁴⁰

L'Humanité, as spokesman for one of the opposing political parties, naturally editorialized against the government and the way it was handling the students. It editorialized almost daily against the de Gaulle government in typical Communist parlance. Editorials were often headlines in two or three inch characters so that their readers would make no mistake about how it viewed the happenings. For example, on May 7 it headlined, "The Responsible Party is the Government!"⁴¹; May 9, "The Protests Spread Against Repression"⁴²; May 11, "Halt to Repression! The Government Responds to the anger of the University with bloody violence"⁴³; May 13, "General Strike -- Students and Workers Unite Against Repression"⁴⁴; and on May 15, "By Millions, Strikers and Demonstrators Bring Charges Against the Gaullist Government."⁴⁵ Commenting on the twenty-four hour strike on May 13 by the workers in a show of

⁴⁰ Editorial, La Presse (Montreal), "The Situation in France", Guy Cormier, June 13, 1968, p. 4.

⁴¹ L'Humanité (Paris), May 7, 1968, p. 1.

⁴² L'Humanité (Paris), May 9, 1968, p. 1.

⁴³ L'Humanité (Paris), May 11, 1968, p. 1.

⁴⁴ L'Humanité (Paris), May 13, 1968, p. 1.

⁴⁵ L'Humanité (Paris), May 15, 1968, p. 1.

support for the students L'Humanité observed, "The great common uprising of the working class and the students has forced the government to pull back, to concede amnesty. This is a victory."⁴⁶ Attacking both the government and the left-wing anarchists at the same time as being the enemies of the students at large, it found that, "the deterioration of the situation, so skillfully maintained by the government, has caused the left-wing agitation to increase... But as for a true program, solutions, a way out for the students, it offers nothing."⁴⁷ A month and a half later, after the police removed the students who had been occupying the Sorbonne, L'Humanité once again criticized the hard core leftists for playing into the hands of de Gaulle. "When... will certain individuals realize that the fight against Gaullism is serious business? ... when will they stop furnishing Gaullism the pretexts that they wait for... and that they sometimes forge for themselves? ... the troubles and disorders work for the government which is using them to give itself the visage of keeper of order and public tranquillity."⁴⁸ Here the paper was looking ahead to the elections. It did not want the students to give the voters reason to vote for de Gaulle as the one who could best ensure the maintenance of law and order. The Gaullists were developing this theme as the major issue of the electoral campaign.

⁴⁶L'Humanité (Paris), Roger Garaudy, May 15, 1968, p. 1.

⁴⁷L'Humanité (Paris), "The Last Word in Gaullism Moderism -- Repression", May 7, 1968, p. 6.

⁴⁸L'Humanité (Paris), June 17, 1968, p. 5.

Although more moderate in its condemnation of the government, Le Figaro also thought that the government shared a large part of the responsibility for the conditions on the universities. In response to a remark made by General de Gaulle in which he criticized the University for the disorders, Le Figaro thought that, "... to blame the University for not having reformed itself is a wrong without foundation: an organism of the State, the University can be reformed only by the government."⁴⁹ For the last ten years the government had made many reforms, but few good ones. "...reforms, God knows! have not been lacking; it is even they that caused the first disorder."⁵⁰ Too many reforms were pushed on the University by reformers who did not know what they were talking about. As for the street disorders, "... the typical mechanism, provocation -- repression, repression -- riot, riot -- repression, set in motion by governmental blundering... has mobilized opinion... in favor of the students..."⁵¹

Le Monde concurred. "... the government... shares a large part of the responsibility for the rioting in the Latin Quarter. Poorly informed and inspired, it gave the impression of hesitating to the will of the movements of the crowd of students, precipitating

⁴⁹ Editorial, Le Figaro (Paris), "Defense of the University", Pierre Gaxotte, June 22, 1968, p. 1.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Editorial, Le Figaro (Paris), "The Fate of the University Depends on the Students", Raymond Aron, June 15, 1968, p. 1.

decisions illy conceived, not arriving at a time when they could have still avoided the worst."⁵² Le Monde felt that the enseignes rendered a service by exposing the problems and the shortcomings of the universities in meeting the challenge of providing suitable conditions for learning, and also by suggesting the reforms that would help the universities provide meaningful education in a modern world. "It is pleasant to observe that a government which, ten years ago, took advantage of the Algiers insurrection to install itself as a permanent fixture, charges those with illegality who... have declared themselves ready to assume their responsibilities before the country."⁵³ The Gaullists were more interested in the grandeur of their leader and his regime than the troubles of the University. These Gaullists, "... deplore the explosion of violence at a moment when the eyes of the entire world see in Paris the capital from where peace will come [the Paris peace talks]." ⁵⁴

Beyond the street fighting and the politics which inevitably follow a social and economic upheaval such as this one, the press looked to the future to see what would come from all this chaos for the university. It was evident to both the French and Canadian presses that some sort of reform was in store for French higher education. One of the chief demands made by the students was that

⁵² Editorial, Le Monde (Paris), "Responsibilities," Jacques Fauvet, May 15, 1968, p. 1.

⁵³ Le Monde (Paris), "The Staked", Alfred Kastler, June 22, 1968, p. 4.

⁵⁴ Le Monde (Paris), "A Grave Misunderstanding", Raymond Barrillon, May 9, 1968, p. 1.

each university be more independent from the Ministry in Paris. "The reform to come... will have to give a larger if not a complete autonomy to each university,"⁵⁵ said Le Soleil. Each local campus had its own particular needs and problems which should be dealt with on the local level. The local school administration knew better than the Ministry in Paris what it could do with what it had. A more autonomous university would also remove the university from the politics and politicians in Paris, hopefully leaving it in the hands of local educators who could then be just that.

Le Devoir and Le Monde saw a political reform as an answer to some of the University's troubles, political in the sense of a different distribution of power at the local level, a change in the power structure of the universities, and not necessarily having anything to do with the politics in Paris. One could no longer think that society was based on a consensus which would negate any radical takeover. The events of May showed how much people were alienated from the political process and the decision-making process.⁵⁶ There was at first only a small group of politically-minded activists, but they were able to activate a larger mass of students to action. Therefore, they were a political force that had to be contended with. If they were allowed into the decision-making process and were given a place in the power structure of the

⁵⁵ Editorial, Le Soleil (Quebec), "The 'Difficult' Reconstruction of the French University", Polrian Sauvageau, May 27, 1968, p. 14.

⁵⁶ Editorial, Le Devoir (Montreal), "The Social and Political Crisis in France", Claude Ryan, May 22, 1968, p. 4.

university, they would no longer have need to revolt. Their lives were being decided and they wanted a part in how the decisions were made. "Not participating directly in production, perfecting reflexion and criticism, having no real material responsibilities, they are... in a position of observing and waiting... Students no longer constitute a caste of future mandarins, but a mass promised to an often mediocre future..."⁵⁷

Another writer for Le Monde saw the danger of a university too much attuned to the material needs of the society that supported it, a university obliged to produce the scientists for its laboratories, the politicians for its government, the salesmen for its business. A university should not have to adapt itself to society. It should first be a privileged agent of intellectual and social criticism, the one institution that could stand back from society and criticize it. It should be first and foremost a producer of the free and creative thinkers which France needed.⁵⁸ The idea of a student as a human blotter that soaks up the wisdom and knowledge of his professors was outdated. More seminar and discussion type classes, more independent research to stimulate creative and imaginative thinking should replace the more conventional lecture classes.

⁵⁷ Le Monde (Paris), Frédéric Gausson, June 6, 1968, p. 1.

⁵⁸ Editorial, Le Monde (Paris), "For the Movement", Alain Touraine, May 11, 1968, p. 9.

⁵⁹ Editorial, Le Monde (Paris), "The Wakening of the Collective Conscience", Hervé Hamon, May 8, 1968, p. 12.

"... This upsets traditions a century old... which have transformed professors into distributors of exalted truths and the students into pencil-pushers."⁵⁹

Le Figaro thought that the university had the right, even the duty to maintain courses that did not appear to have any visible application. However it should also try to steer students towards courses of study in which they would be able to find work,⁶⁰ because "to register in the faculty of letters if one does not have the vocation to teach is a waste of one's time..."⁶¹

Reaction in the Canadian press to the student riots and what the French University ought to do as a result did not differ greatly from the reaction in the French press. Some of the newspapers were pro-student, such as Le Monde, L'Humanité, and Le Devoir while others were anti-student, Le Figaro, France-Soir, and La Presse. Le Soleil did not seem to fit in either category. Their reaction was not according to national boundaries but rather according to the political philosophy of the particular paper, i.e. conservative, moderate, or liberal. One paper, L'Humanité, was radical in speech but more conservative in thought than one would expect for the organ of the French Communist Party.

⁵⁹ Editorial, Le Monde (Paris), "The Wakening of the Collective Conscience", Hervé Ramon, May 8, 1968, p. 12.

⁶⁰ Editorial, Le Figaro (Paris), "Conclusions and Propositions", Raymond Aron, June 19, 1968, p. 1.

⁶¹ Editorial, Le Figaro (Paris), "The Faculty of Letters", Pierre Gaxotte, June 1, 1968, p. 1.

There was no evidence that their common heritage and language played any part in the formation of these philosophies. The treatment of the student situation in La Monde or Le Devoir, for example, would probably be similar to that of the New York Times because they all have similar philosophies, in this case, liberal. In Le Devoir and Le Soleil there were articles that might support a different conclusion. Le Soleil wrote, "Here in Quebec (province) these troubles are not breaking out and have not broken out..." but, "Laval University... is boiling inside. The students, supported tacitly by their professors, are anxious to participate in the management of the university."⁶² Le Soleil was concerned that something might erupt in the still docile Quebec universities. "It is important to get on with reform in Quebec higher education as soon as possible before the agitation in Europe and the United States comes here to Quebec."⁶³

The significance of these remarks is that, in a year when student unrest around the world was common, Quebec students were reacting as a result of action taken by other students, regardless of their nationality. The fact that they were both French-speaking was not the point. A position paper of the UGEQ (General Union of Students of Quebec) appeared in Le Devoir, saying in part that the

⁶²Editorial, Le Soleil (Quebec), "The Students Want a Greater Participation", Benoit La Voie, June 7, 1968, p. 7.

⁶³Editorial, Le Soleil (Quebec), "Violence in Paris", May 8, 1968, p. 4.

UCEQ made a common cause with the French students because of "The similarity of our situation, our aspirations, and our demands vis-a-vis society and the education system."⁶⁴ The key word here is our. One can not be certain if our refers to students in general or to French-speaking students in general. The researcher believed that it referred to the former. The following quotations supported this conclusion. Le Devoir and Le Figaro felt that what was happening in France in 1968 was nothing new in the French experience because of their natural propensity for revolutionary activity. "...the French have a long revolutionary tradition and what is happening this year in Paris has taken place under all regimes... The black flag and the red flag have waved over quite a few barricades,"⁶⁵ and "the latent anarchism of the French people has shown a stupefied world how an anarchistic revolution can, in just a few weeks, precipitate the collapse of a modern society."⁶⁶ As for the age of the French university, Le Devoir wrote, "... it is natural for the crisis to be more bitter and the confrontation more brutal in Europe than in America because the university over there is very much older and thus slower to 'budge' and because the students there are traditionally politicized."⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Le Devoir (Montreal), June 5, 1968, p. 4.

⁶⁵ Le Devoir (Montreal), May 16, 1968, p. 9.

⁶⁶ Editorial, Le Figaro (Paris), "Against the Institution of Terrorism", Raymond Aron, June 14, 1968, p. 1.

⁶⁷ Le Devoir (Montreal), loc. cit.

Thus what was happening in France could happen in Quebec, not because France and Quebec shared the same tongue and the same heritage, but because it was happening all over the world.

CHAPTER IV

THE WORKER STRIKE

The student disorders were already entering their third week before the workers decided to try improving their situation vis-a-vis the government and industry. In France the government controls a large part of the economy. It runs the railroad, the radio and television networks, the telegraph and telephone companies, Air France, the mines, and the gas and electric companies, and the Renault automobile factories, from which the worker revolt sprang when the Renault factory at Lyon was struck and occupied on Friday, May 17. Thus when the time came for the workers to negotiate a return to work they had to bargain with government spokesmen as well as representatives from private industry. Some of the most difficult negotiating took place between the workers and the government, and the strikes tended to be longer in the public sectors. The strike at the ORTF for example (Office of French Radio and Television Networks) lasted well into July, due in part to the sensitivity to the issue of government control of the news -- a problem that has never been settled to the satisfaction of the radio and television journalists. Especially during this extraordinarily difficult period, the French public depended almost entirely on newspapers for its information on events. The following communique appeared in Le Figaro as the strike was still approaching its zenith:

A communiqué from the Union of the Parisian Press: In the dramatic circumstances that are now sweeping the country, the Parisian press will continue, according to its tradition, to inform its readers of all political persuasions with objectivity, and to record the happenings of the diverse political and labor groups which have any bearing on events.

However, every newspaper reserves to itself the incontestable right to comment on these events, to say in conscience to its readers, and based on its own convictions, what it thinks and what it suggests... It should be well understood that the editorial staff of Le Figaro will accept no kind of censorship, regardless of its source. (1)

France-Soir printed a similar communiqué.

A communiqué by the union of journalists of France-Soir: 'France-Soir'... will appear as usual so that the public may continue to be informed. However the journalists of France-Soir affirm their solidarity with the general movement and its demands for the professors and workers. (2)

La Presse felt that the reporting of events by the French press left something to be desired. Each newspaper accused the others of inadequate or false coverage in exchanges which were often reduced to name-calling. "If French public opinion has been overwhelmed by events, confused by conflicting reports of what was going on, and humiliated by having been taken (by the students... and the workers) what does the French press have to say? There is anarchy there also!"³ This was "journalistic folklore of the worst kind."⁴

¹ Le Figaro (Paris), May 20, 1968, p. 1.

² France-Soir (Paris), May 24, 1968, p. 1.

³ La Presse (Montreal), May 18, 1968, p. 4.

⁴ Ibid.

By the end of May, just before General de Gaulle went on national television to announce the new elections in June, public confidence in the country's ability to pull itself from the depths to which she had fallen had itself reached its lowest point. According to a poll conducted on May 27, by the IFOP which appeared in France-Soir, one-third of those polled feared a revolution would be the result of the current situation. Fifty-five per cent expressed concern about the country's future. Fifty per cent were "rather hostile" toward the student demonstrations.⁵ At this point the French economy was losing \$1 billion a week⁶ and 5% of its GNP for the three week period ending June 6,⁷ as a result of the strike idling more than ten million workers.

The causes of the strike were not as difficult to fathom as the case with the students. Compared to workers in the five other Common Market countries, the French worker worked more hours per week, and with the exception of the Italians, received the lowest hourly wage.

	WORK WEEK (in hours)	HOURLY WAGE (in Francs)
		5 francs = 1 dollar
FRANCE	47	4.05
Luxembourg	46	6.00
the Netherlands	46	4.75
Germany	44	5.75
Belgium	44	5.05
Italy	36	3.45

(8)

⁵ France-Soir (Paris), May 31, 1968, p. 4.

⁶ Le Soleil (Quebec), May 29, 1968, p. 2.

⁷ France-Soir (Paris), June 6, 1968, p. 5.

⁸ France-Soir (Paris), May 28, 1968, p. 10.

The student revolt was indirectly responsible for the strike. Previous to May, 1968, the workers had rarely acted as a unified group, imposing their collective demands on the government and private industry. The student-worker march across Paris on May 13, made them aware of their numerical strength, their unity, and their force. Just a few weeks before, union leaders had considered a national strike as being neither wanted nor possible. Then came the student revolt. "... amplified by the errors committed by the government and the excesses of the repression, a climate was created. The fact was proven that the government was sensitive to forceful demonstrations."⁹ "They [the workers] were fed up with their unfruitful encounters with the government. They were fed up with living on meager salaries. They were fed up with the maddening casualness with which their demands were rejected. Ten years is enough! [referring to de Gaulle's tenure at the Elysée] It is even too much!"¹⁰

The students could not have been happier as the strike quickly gained in force and soon spread over the entire country. They rushed to the sides of their comrades in the fight against the Gaullist regime and were surprised when they were greeted at arms' length at the factory gates. For them the overthrow of a bourgeois society necessitated the alliance of the student and labor forces.

⁹ Editorial, Le Monde (Paris), "Chain Reaction", Jacques Fauvet, May 21, 1968, p. 1.

¹⁰ L'Humanité (Paris), René Andrieu, May 16, 1968, p. 1.

However the workers did not see it that way. "... the mass of students," wrote France-Soir, "is incontrollable and uncontrolled. It could be suddenly carried away... by foolhardy acts which would then provoke a police intervention supported by a public opinion finally tired of these excesses..."¹¹ "The students want to overthrow the University and society at the same time; the workers on strike are fighting for material advantages, without putting the whole social system in cause..."¹² L'Humanité was for once in complete agreement with France-Soir and Le Monde. "The hell raising, the acts of violence, the riots have the one goal of creating confusion and thus scaring into the Gaullist camp the men and women whose alliance the working class is counting on."¹³

The Canadian press arrived at similar conclusions. The workers, led by the CGT (General Confederation of Labor), a Communist inspired labor union which took control of the strike after it had gotten started, had been suspicious of the students since the crisis began. "The young students were welcomed by the strikers who were happy enough to keep them at a distance."¹⁴ "The CGT and the Communist Party were very critical of the intentions of the student organizations and insisted on the fact that the

¹¹ France-Soir (Paris), "The Factory Takes a Stride With the Sorbonne", Jean Feriot, May 20, 1968, p. 3.

¹² Le Monde (Paris), "The Fruits of Spring", Maurice Duverger, May 31, 1968, p. 1.

¹³ L'Humanité (Paris), Laurent Salini, May 27, 1968, p. 3.

¹⁴ Le Soleil (Quebec), May 18, 1968, p. 43.

working class had no need for [student] supporters."¹⁵ And according to La Presse, "After the exaltation of the barricades and the satisfaction of having shaken the government, the students will no doubt understand why the labor unions have not totally linked their fate with that of education. Student unionism will always be a 'privileged' unionism: it does not have to take the pressured of economic life into account."¹⁶ The association of the student unions with Cohn-Bendit further estranged the workers from the students. "... the rapport between the student organizations and the CGT and the Communist Party, arch enemies of the leader of the Movement of March 22, becomes even more strained."¹⁷ For the Communists, Cohn-Bendit was ennemi public numéro un.

As the strike gained in force, the CGT became more and more reluctant about joining the students in their demonstrations. "It is necessary to put a halt to any new provocation which would greatly prejudice the public against the [worker] movement in its presentation of grievances."¹⁸

What was the students' reaction to the cool and sometimes hostile reception given them by the workers when the strike was in full swing? "The students have some reason to feel bitterness. Aren't they the forgotten ones, the rejected ones, the condemned ones?"¹⁹

¹⁵ Le Devoir (Montreal), May 18, 1968, p. 1.

¹⁶ La Presse (Montreal), June 12, 1968, p. 4.

¹⁷ La Presse (Montreal), May 29, 1968, p. 1.

¹⁸ Le Soleil (Quebec), May 27, 1968, p. 1.

¹⁹ Editorial, France-Soir (Paris), "The Condemned Ones", Jean Feriot, May 28, 1968, p. 4.

It was they who set the stage for the workers and made advances possible. They had gone to the aid of the workers and had been rebuffed and had become more and more despised by the public while the workers, who were actually more harmful to the country, suffered no adverse reaction.

The French and Canadian press compared the worker movement to that of the student movement. Le Devoir noted that, as with the student riots, "the leftist parties were at least as surprised as the government, and the unions were completely taken unawares by events."²⁰ The labor unions were able to do in three weeks with one strike what five years of strikettes [little strikes] had not been able to do.²¹ La Presse and L'Humanité remarked on the difference in style of the strikers compared to the students. "They asserted their rights in a remarkable calm. If they 'occupied' the factories it is probably to bar the route to anarchists' provocations (student or otherwise)."²² What was striking about this movement was its power and also its sang-froid. "The working class, because of its size and its position in production, remains the decisive and revolutionary force and the irreconcilable adversary of the capitalist regime."²³

²⁰ Editorial, Le Devoir (Montreal), "A Fundamental Choice Will Have to Rise From the Elections", J. M. L., June 4, 1968, p. 7.

²¹ Le Devoir (Montreal), June 17, 1968, p. 4.

²² Editorial, La Presse (Montreal), "The French Anarchy and Revolt", Jean Mohling, June 15, 1968, p. 68.

²³ Editorial, L'Humanité (Paris), "Gulliver On His Feet", René Andrieu, May 21, 1968, p. 1.

The workers were able to maintain this coolness because of the control imposed by the unions, the CGT in particular. "Spontaneous in origin, this movement is now controlled by the unions,"²⁴ which led them into the fray with precise objectives and a discipline of action. The difference between them and the students was one of tactics if not of objectives.²⁵

France had many unions but the largest and in this instance the most influential was the CGT. This union and its secretary-general, Georges Séguy, were the subject of editorials in Le Devoir and Le Figaro. Georges Séguy had two goals in mind throughout the strike. The first was to control the strike and separate it from the students' fight. He was distrustful of the leftist groups and especially of Cohn-Bendit who to him was as much the enemy as the government. His second goal was to limit the consequences of the strike. He, the CGT, and the Communist Party were not interested in a governmental overthrow because France was not prepared. Such an overthrow would be harmful to the labor movement in general. They instead wanted to work within established institutions and laws until such a time that the left could come to power at the ballot box. An alliance with the students and a continuation of the strike any longer than necessary would frighten the voters and put this goal in jeopardy.²⁶ "Baited by the CFDT [a non-Communist

²⁴France-Soir (Paris), May 20, 1968, p. 3.

²⁵Le Figaro (Paris), Thierry Maulnier, May 23, 1968, p. 1.

²⁶Editorial, Le Devoir (Montreal), "The Legalistic Left and the Revolted Left," Jacques Duquesne, June 18, 1968, p. 1.

pro-student union], the students, the PSU [a leftist party], and the intellectuals, the CGT tried to keep control of its troupes while negotiating with the government which it continued to treat as a sound interlocuter."²⁷

Commenting on the French Communist Party (PCF), France-Soir wrote, "Let it be well understood that the Communist Party refuses to cut France in two. The proof? It does not demand power for itself, quite the contrary. It will participate in the government, certainly, but not in the top positions."²⁸ Their objective, said Le Figaro, "is not to make revolution, but to not let themselves be passed on the left by the students, by the Maoists, by the young workers."²⁹ The Gaullist government and the Communist Party were the only two forces that sought to stabilize the situation during the crisis. "The CFDT and the Federation of the Left [FGDS, another party on the left] are powerless between these two pillars of France; the Communist Party, which is waiting for its day, and the bourgeois State, around which a majority of French group in a period of crisis."³⁰ The relationship between the Gaullists and the Communists was marked by a mixture of alliance and hostility, cooperation and competition. In the opinion of Jean Feriot,

²⁷ Editorial, Le Figaro (Paris), "From Nanterre to the Elysée", Raymond Aron, June 6, 1968, p. 1.

²⁸ France-Soir (Paris), June 14, 1968, p. 2.

²⁹ Editorial, Le Figaro (Paris), "After the Storm", Raymond Aron, June 4, 1968, p. 1.

³⁰ Ibid.

writing in France-Soir, "... Mr. Waldeck Rochet [the secretary-general of the French Communist Party] has, in just a few days, become a very important man; he holds in his hands the key to the present social and political crisis."³¹

Not all editorialists shared this confidence in the Communists' sense of fair play and legality. Another writer thought that "the Communist Party would choose the road to insurrection. The constitution abolished, a provisional government set up, elections put off to an undetermined date, such would be the blueprint of the model our history has already furnished on several occasions."³²

One of the objectives of the worker strike, as the case with the students in their revolt, was a form of co-management in the factories, or "participation," which became the key word in de Gaulle's plan to win the support of the working class before the June elections. In a Communistic system, the workers own the means of production and operate the factory, and in a capitalistic system, the management owns the means of production and operates the factory. Participation was to be a compromise of the two, giving the workers a managerial role in the factory and also a direct percentage of any profit realized. This was not a new idea, nor was it such a good one. As one critic put it, "If he wants to impose participation on the government officials, the factory

³¹Editorial, France-Soir (Paris), "The Key to the Social and Political Crisis", Jean Ferriot, May 23, 1968, p. 12.

³²France-Soir (Paris), "DeGaulle and the Communist Party Before the Same Choice -- Legality or Force", May 31, 1968, p. 4.

owners, and the teachers, General de Gaulle will have his work cut out for him."³³ Those who already exercised authority would not be anxious to relinquish it.

The workers were fairly successful in their negotiations with the government and industry. Their demands included the usual pay increases, a shortening of the work day and week, a lower retirement age with a larger pension, and better working conditions, which were all presented once more. Financial gains in particular concerned the press which worried about a heavy financial burden placed on an already shaky economy from a three week loss of production. In many areas the workers won a 15% pay hike and the press wondered how management was going to pay for this increase and still make a profit. One solution would be to raise prices on the goods produced. This however would not only cause inflation, it would drive French goods out of the international market. Protective import duties could be thrown up to protect French goods but in either event unemployment would result and the workers would be in worse shape than when they started. "The question that observers ask," said Le Soleil, "is won't this leap ahead in salaries give full rein to a run away inflation? And one also wonders about the fate of the Common Market..."³⁴

Le Soleil added, "... the advantages suddenly granted... could seriously affect France's trading position in the European and

³³ France-Soir (Paris), "Participation", June 22, 1968, p. 4.

³⁴ Le Soleil (Quebec), June 27, 1968, p. 2.

international markets. A year from now these economic repercussions could become painful for France and could be translated once more into a vast protest movement on the political level."³⁵

Others were not as pessimistic. France-Soir felt that with more than \$5 billion reserves in gold the French government could bail out the economy for two or three years until it had the chance to regulate itself once more. This could be done by paying for the financial gains won by the workers. Low interest loans could be made to industry and in other ways the economy could be streamlined making it more competitive and efficient so that prices would not have to be raised.³⁶ "... There will certainly be for the moment a round of price increases." The solution would be a "very rapid economic expansion, more rapid than any we have ever known."³⁷

There was no great difference between the interpretation of events in Canada compared to France that would indicate a national point of view that was different from the one in France. The Canadian press saw the issues in much the same light that the French saw them, the only difference being that the French were directly affected by them and the Canadians were not. Unlike the crisis of the French University, the Canadians did not fear that

³⁵Le Soleil (Quebec), "The Electoral Climate in France", June 14, 1968, p. 4.

³⁶France-Soir (Paris), June 6, 1968, p. 3.

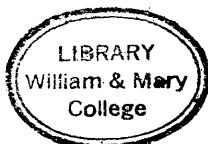
³⁷Editorial, France-Soir (Paris), "Strikes, the Movement, Hardens in the Automobile Industry", Francois Gault, June 12, 1968, p. 5.

the worker strike and the problems in the French economy might descend on Canada. The labor situation in Canada was quite different from what it was in France. Unlike the United States and Canada, in Europe there was a pluralism in the Labor movement. To be successful in their confrontations with the government and private industry, the numerous unions had to make a common cause, something they rarely did. The result was a weak bargaining position as each union would try to negotiate its own demands often squabbling with other unions for the allegiance of the workers of a certain factory. "... numerous cases have been observed where a certain union counselled its adherents to accept an accord with the bosses, while another invited its own to reject it."³⁸ It was only by the very abnormal conditions caused by the student crisis that the CGT was able to persuade all the workers to move together and confront the government and industry with a united force. The result was one of the most successful strikes for labor in French history.

That France was not sailing on some mighty troubled waters during this most turbulent period, few will deny. However there were always those even in the darkest hours who did not lose faith

The ship solid, the captain firm at the helm, here we are one more time on a sea of difficulties. Awakened by an energetic youth in the chains of a fossilized university

³⁸ Editorial, Le Devoir (Montreal), "Reform Between Conservatism and Violence", J. M. L. in June 12, 1968, p. 5.



... the Country has pulled itself together again. There is not a Frenchman worthy of the name who was mistaken about it: it was the France of the barricades, the France of the Bastille, the France of the Rights of Man, in short, the eternal France that offered her lacerated but unfailing visage to the bullets of police repression and despotic power. The wounds will be numerous and time will be necessary to heal them. But the forces of democracy will prevail. Vive la République! Vive la France! (39)

and those that did.

The present French crisis... will not be unraveled by words of appeasement, the balm of promises, and a mini-reform. Still off in the wings the international community is enchanted by the course of events. Poor France! Diverse French personalities will speak... historic words about her. To no avail, alas! they will not change anything. France is sick and she detests doctors. (40)

³⁹ Editorial, Le Figaro (Paris), "Special Future", Pierre Daninos, May 21, 1968, p. 1.

⁴⁰ Editorial, La Presse (Montreal), "At the Reform-Anarchy Crossroads", Roger Champoux, May 23, 1968, p. 4.

CHAPTER V

DE GAULLE AND THE ELECTIONS

If events the first two weeks of May in France were controlled by the students who rioted in the streets and fought with the police, and by the workers who walked off their jobs and occupied the factories the third week, the events which followed were controlled by General de Gaulle as he took the situation in hand using it as the tool that forged the biggest victory for a political party in French history. In the time span of a month, while France teetered on the brink of civil war, President de Gaulle at first seemed overwhelmed by his enemies only to recover dramatically and substantially consolidate his position as the undisputed leader of France.

The word most often associated with Charles de Gaulle is "grandeur," a word rarely used by himself but one which formed the basis of everything he did and was. In his Memoirs of the War, he could have been talking about himself as he was in fact talking about France. "All my life I have made for myself a certain idea about France... I instinctively have the impression that Providence created her for either tremendous success or dismal failure. If sometimes mediocrity marks her deeds and actions, it is because of the mistakes and absurdities of the French people and not because of the genius of the Motherland... France is herself only if

she is in the first rank... In short, France can not be France without grandeur."¹

One of the first duties and obligations that a leader has to his people is to lead, to give direction and meaning to the nation especially in times of great social unrest. In the days when the workers had just gone out on strike and the students were still rioting at will in the streets, many wondered whether de Gaulle was so preoccupied with grandeur and aloofness that he did not seize what was going on. "No one will regret that a jolt -- and what a jolt it was! -- was necessary to make our leaders come down off their clouds. Greatness does not consist in contemplating the stars, not being the least bit interested in what the little people are doing down here."² Concerning the grandeur de Gaulle reserved for France but not for the French people, Le Monde noted, "The grandeur of France is a cruel joke if it is not meant for the French people also..."³

De Gaulle was on a good will trip to Rumania when the troubles first began to erupt in France. From the time he returned on May 18 until he finally went before national television on May 24, his only public comment was "la reforme, oui; le chienlit, non." This phrase

¹ Charles de Gaulle, Memoires de Guerre (Paris: Plon, 1954), p. 1.

² Editorial, Le Figaro (Paris), "The Emptiness", L. G.-R., May 17, 1968, p. 1.

³ Editorial Le Monde (Paris), "The Man's Empire", Jean de Deer, June 6, 1968, p. 4.

was greeted with surprise and puzzlement by not a small portion of the French because the word "chienlit," when broken down, chie-en-lit, means "shit-in-bed." The dictionary, Le Robert, defines chienlit as (1), masked clowns who run in the streets during the Mardi Gras, and (2), someone who "soils his bed."⁴ One may assume that de Gaulle was referring to the former meaning. At the time however it created quite a stir and could only add to the confusion that was widespread in France at that time.

Under the Constitution of the Fifth Republic, de Gaulle had three choices of action to bring the situation under control. He could invoke article 16 of the Constitution which would declare a state of national emergency and give him absolute power, or he could dissolve the National Assembly and call for new elections, or he could hold a referendum in which he could outline his program of action that the people would then vote on. This third choice was the one he took, and on May 24 he appeared on television to announce the referendum which he would elaborate on at a future date. Below are sections of this address.

For almost thirty years now events have imposed on me... the duty to lead our country to assume her proper destiny in order to prevent certain people from taking charge of it in spite of this destiny. I am ready for it once again... [but] I need the French people to say that this is what they want. [If the vote is "non"] I will no longer assume my position [as president]. If the vote is "oui"], I will undertake change wherever it is necessary. (5)

⁴France-Soir (Paris), May 21, 1968, p. 3.

⁵Le Soleil (Quebec), May 25, 1968, p. 52.

Reaction to the speech was almost immediate. In the biggest display of rage and destruction until that time, students went on a rampage, battling with police, ripping up cobble stones to build their barricades and throw at the police, and setting fire to cars, buses, and occasional police vans, as well as the Paris Stock Exchange. In perhaps the only positive comment on the address, Le Figaro wrote, "He did not want to speak any sooner than he did in order to show that he had not lost his cool."⁶

The negative comments were more numerous. The people had wanted a plan of action to deal with the situation but for de Gaulle the essential was to have a vote of confidence to show that the people were still with him. "Finally coming down from Olympia, the chief of state last night addressed the nation which has been plunged in anxiety for the last fifteen days,"⁷ but made no mention of his ten year reign which had been so heavy in consequences for France. Canadian papers were negative also. "It [the speech] did not make any analysis of the responsibilities of the present situation nor any precise condemnation of the students and workers."⁸ "Students, workers, peasants, the opposition, everyone received the speech by President de Gaulle very badly."⁹ France-Soir examined the reaction more closely:

⁶Le Figaro (Paris), Andre Francois-Ponct (Academie francaise), May 28, 1968, p. 1.

⁷Le Figaro (Paris), L. G.-R., May 25, 1968, p. 1.

⁸Le Soleil (Queben), May 25, 1968, p. 1.

⁹La Presse (Montreal), Pierre St. Germain, May 25, 1968, p. 1.

Charles de Gaulle and the people are face to face, and no longer side by side. Here he is disarmed before the French people who no longer recognize him... the chief of state has shown that he plans to grant (participation) even if it is imposed on him by a popular movement... What he was looking for was not the opening of a dialogue but an act of faith from the nation. (10)

L'Humanité was not as kind. The day after the address it headlined, "De Gaulle Verifies His Failure: Powerful Demonstrations Across the Country."¹¹ The same day, in an editorial entitled, "Go Away, Now," L'Humanité declared,

The time for promises and illusions has passed. This time the charm has been broken. Definitively... the chief of state has let it be known that if the referendum vote is not favorable he will go home to his fireside. Great! But why wait? The present government does not represent anything anymore. So, while there is still time, go away, mon général. (12)

During the week that followed the TV address France lived through her darkest days. De Gaulle had acted and it had been to no avail. If there were any change, the situation was even worse. The last flicker of hope had vanished with the light of morning over the smoking hulks of the burnt-out cars, and the French people trembled in anticipation of what further disasters fate had in store for them. The situation was breaking down from hour to hour. The government no longer seemed to have control of events. Then on May 29 came the news that de Gaulle had left Paris. No one at first knew

¹⁰ Editorial, France-Soir (Paris), "Face to Face", Jean Feriot, May 27, 1968, p. 5.

¹¹ L'Humanité (Paris), May 25, 1968, p. 1.

¹² Ibid.

where he had gone, which only heightened the feeling of anxiety and confusion. The immediate reaction why he had left Paris to return to Colombey (his home) was that he had at last met his match and had gone into retirement. "... everything points to the fact that he has gone home as a simple citizen to his village and to his sorrow."¹³ With the walls of government crumbling and falling around him, Prime Minister Pompidoux was the only one left who was visible. "One had the impression that there is no more government, no more state, just one man who fights on with courage in the tempest."¹⁴ The day after de Gaulle left for Colombey, L'Humanité headlined, "800,000 Demonstrate a Single Desire: Popular Government! De Gaulle to Colombey: Retirement or Maneuver?"¹⁵ France-Soir lamented his departure.

... the workers no longer want this regime, they no longer want de Gaulle... this will signify that the referendum is impossible... When the General turns to the Gaullists he does not find anything except wilderness... The time has come to accuse the French of ingratitude or to admire them for writing themselves this new page in their history.

Should de Gaulle just quietly go away or should he make a fight to the end? No one can give him the answer. De Gaulle is alone. (16)

The Canadians admired this move as being very typical of the General. For them this was not a retreat from the battle; it was

¹³ Editorial, Le Monde (Paris), "The Only Ending", Pierre Viansson-Ponte, May 30, 1968, p. 1.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ L'Humanité (Paris), May 30, 1968, p. 1.

¹⁶ Editorial, France-Soir (Paris), "De Gaulle Is Alone", Jean Feriot, May 30, 1968, p. 4.

a tactical movement in a fight he planned to win, and win it he did. "The departure from Paris of the chief of state was the coup de theatre of the morning. A certain mystery still hung over last night concerning the general's day,"¹⁷ observed Le Devoir. La Presse discussed his love of intrigue and surprise. "Every word, every silence reveals in this man a love of mystery and secret. He was last seen as he was taking off for Colombey. All this of course was carefully prepared... when nothing is happening, de Gaulle is bored. De Gaulle is not a man to leave the field of battle so easily."¹⁸

De Gaulle wrote about the political use of silence and mystery in his book, La Fil de l'Épée (The Sword's Edge), "... prestige goes hand in hand with mystery, for one hardly reveres what one knows too well. A certain element must exist that others can not grasp and that intrigues them, moves them, keeps them breathless... one must close oneself in an ivory tower, inaccessible to and unaware of one's subordinates."¹⁹ On the power of silence he wrote, "Nothing enhances authority more than silence: splendor for the strong, refuge for the weak, modesty for the proud and pride for the humble, prudence for the wise and purpose for the foolish. To

¹⁷Le Devoir (Montreal), May 30, 1968, p. 5.

¹⁸Editorial, La Presse (Montreal), "When Everything Goes Badly, De Gaulle Becomes Himself Again". Jean-Paul Kauffmann, June 3, 1968, p. 5.

¹⁹Charles de Gaulle, La Fil de l'Épée (Paris: 10 18, 1944), p. 78

... speak is to dilute one's thought,... to spread out when action calls for concentration."²⁰

An interesting note on the General's activities during this period, only the Canadian press knew at the time that de Gaulle went not only to Colombey but also to Germany, apparently to talk with some of his military advisors concerning the situation. "It seems that General de Gaulle went to see his brother-in-law, General Alain de Boissieu, at Mulhouse [Germany] and that he met several military leaders there."²¹ One can not be sure still exactly whether de Gaulle actually did go to Germany. However there were five hours on May 29, that the press could not account for. Likewise one can not be sure whether the following exchange took place at Colombey between de Gaulle and some of his advisors, but it illustrates his remarkable coolness under stress:

"My general, you must speak. This is the last chance. You do not have much time left."

"Gentlemen, my speech is not ready yet."

"But my general!..."

"Just because the situation is bad does not mean I have to make a bad speech!"²²

De Gaulle returned to Paris on May 30, and that evening he gave his speech on nation-wide television and radio. As with the

²⁰ Ibid., p. 80.

²¹ La Presse (Montreal), May 30, 1968, p. 1.

²² La Presse (Montreal), June 3, 1968, p. 1.

first, the public reaction was immediate and massive. A crowd of about one million people demonstrated on the Champs-Élysées in a tremendous pro-de Gaulle rally. Instead of chanting the slogans "de Gaulle, assassin" or "de Gaulle, go away", the people shouted "PCF, go to hell", and "back to Berlin with Cohn-Bendit." The following are excerpts from his address to the nation:

Today I am dissolving the National Assembly in preparation for national elections in. I have... proposed a referendum which will give the people the opportunity to prescribe a profound reform of the economy and the University... and will also let them say if they still have confidence in me or not... We are being forced to submit to a power which would impose itself on the nation in a climate of national hopelessness... the force that I am referring to is that of totalitarian Communism, (25)

and by so speaking, de Gaulle launched his campaign against the French Communist Party. L'Humanité was understandably upset.

"De Gaulle Answers Affirming His Desire to Impose His Dictatorship."²⁴

In an editorial entitled "The Old Man and Hate," L'Humanité concluded,

"To the two million workers on strike... he answers by insult, blackmail, and intimidation. Never has the scorn that he feels for these Frenchmen guilty of not scraping and bowing before him appeared with so much bitterness... The chief of state is lying when he accuses the Communist Party of preparing subversion."²⁵

²³France-Soir (Paris), June 1, 1968, p. 2.

²⁴L'Humanité (Paris), May 31, 1968, p. 1.

²⁵Ibid.

Because of this virulent attack on the Communists, "... the eight year honeymoon between the USSR and France has been bruskiy terminated..."²⁶

The Paris press reacted favorably to the speech.

Yesterday, de Gaulle found the voice and accents of great days gone by. Last night the people of Paris demonstrated that they had chosen democracy with the pitiful material means at their disposal, facing the powerful machine of Communist subversion. They have had enough of the so-called defenders of liberty who have prevented them from expressing themselves in the factories, censuring their true wishes.
(27)

"...he chose to be the chief of state with all that implies of exalted language, sober tone, and measured gesture..."²⁸ La Presse was not so unequivocal in its praise, noting that the address divided the French into two equal groups.

His intervention has been... greeted with a mixed reaction. The man on the street reacted with skepticism, the extreme right and the moderates with reserve, the left /students, unions, political parties/ with active hostility, and the Gaullists of course with admiration... for the most part, a rather large part of public opinion does not have any confidence in de Gaulle. As for the enragés still occupying the universities, participation does not interest them at all.
(29)

For Le Devoir the speech broke the deadening effect of the hopelessness felt by many Frenchmen. "It appears... evident that the jarring effect of de Gaulle's speech... and the enormous

²⁶Le Soleil (Quebec), June 1, 1968, p. 1.

²⁷Editorial, Le Figaro (Paris), L. G.-R., May 31, 1968, p. 1.

²⁸Editorial, Le Figaro (Paris), "The Key Word", Marcel Gabilly, June 8, 1968, p. 1.

²⁹La Presse (Montreal), Pierre St. Germain, June 8, 1968, p. 8.

demonstration of support for the chief of state... as well as the announcement of the upcoming elections have contributed to a general relaxing of the atmosphere and an acceleration of negotiations..."³⁰

"All signs show that the crisis has just reached a decisive point."³¹

Concerning de Gaulle, Le Devoir felt that "the speech given... by de Gaulle has proven that he still retains an extraordinary vigor. One wishes to see him emerge as the victor in the immediate future,"³² but later when things have returned to normal perhaps a younger man more in tune with the times should take over. "President de Gaulle," wrote Le Soleil, "by his firm attitude in the crisis which is shaking France, has begun a modest movement back to work today."³³ La Presse said, "He made liars out of those who predicted his departure, and his decision conformed with the very nature of the man and soldier."³⁴

Re the demonstration on the Champs-Élysées, "... this was irrefutable proof that de Gaulle is not alone. As for the Canadians, their reaction was ... quite different."³⁵

Although the Canadians were happy that he finally took decisive action in the crisis, there would have been no love lost on his behalf if the situation had turned out differently. This state of

³⁰ Le Devoir (Montreal), May 31, 1968, p. 1.

³¹ Le Devoir (Montreal), June 1, 1968, p. 6.

³² Ibid., p. 4.

³³ Le Soleil (Quebec), May 31, 1968, p. 1.

³⁴ Editorial, La Presse (Montreal), "De Gaulle Is Not Alone", Renaude Lapointe, May 31, 1968, p. 6.

³⁵ Ibid.

affairs was the result of a trip the General took to Canada in July, 1967, at the invitation of the federal government in Ottawa. De Gaulle created a scandal on July 24, when in a speech he voiced the hope that the province of Quebec and its French-speaking inhabitants would soon realize their destiny as an independent country, free at last of their Anglo-Saxon masters. This upset and embarrassed the Canadian government as well as the Québécois, the majority of whom did not want independence from English-speaking Canada. Relations between the two countries deteriorated and from that time the French Canadian press has never been overly fond of the French president.

One can therefore understand their shock, anger, and humiliation concerning a TV interview on June 7 in which de Gaulle alluded to his famous "Vive le Québec libre" speech of July 24, 1967. Asked if he considered himself a revolutionary, he answered,

...yes, if being a revolutionary consists in profoundly changing what is. And in that sense I am not at all bothered to be a revolutionary, since I have often been one: setting up the Resistance, attacking the Vichy regime, giving the vote to women and the Africans, ... starting the liberation of the French in Canada ... /italics not in the original/ (36)

This remark passed unnoticed in the French press but in La Presse and Le Soleil it was the headline story. "I Obtained the Beginning of the Liberation of the French Canadians,"³⁷ and "We Began the Liberation of the French of Canada -- de Gaulle. President Charles

³⁶ La Presse (Montreal), June 8, 1968, p. 1.

³⁷ Ibid.

de Gaulle said yesterday that... he gave the 'Vive le Québec Libre' speech because he is himself a 'revolutionary'."³⁸ Le Soleil was beside itself with rage.

... the general has not turned up his nose at a new opportunity to meddle in the internal affairs of Canada, which displays so well the cynicism of all his interventions in this regard.

As for the assertion to the effect that "We obtained the beginning of the liberation of the French in Canada," here again is another illustration of the unbelievable cynicism by which he never ceases to intervene in our domestic affairs. Since the Vinny incident [where the speech was made], all the gestures, all the declarations of de Gaulle have been carefully calculated with the objective of playing on our internal divisions. If there is a population on earth that is in need of being liberated... it is surely that of France which supports the yoke of a general who is well on his way down the road to senility. (39)

In addition to editorial comment on de Gaulle in connection with specific events, the Canadian press made an overview of de Gaulle and the period as a whole, and this comment was almost totally negative, leaving no doubt concerning what they thought of de Gaulle, in or out of crisis.

At seventy-seven, after ten years of uninterrupted power, the one who has himself admitted that he has had to 'carry France [at times] kicking and screaming', gives for the first time signs of fatigue, even weariness. (40)

Concerning the general situation, Le Devoir found that "... the events that have been taking place in France these past two weeks show that

³⁸ Le Soleil (Quebec), June 8, 1968, p. 1.

³⁹ Le Soleil (Quebec), June 11, 1968, p. 1.

⁴⁰ Editorial, La Presse (Montreal), "Beyond a Collective Drama", Cyrille Pelteau, May 30, 1968, p. 4.

no political leader, be he called de Gaulle or anything else, has no lesson to give other countries as to how they should conduct their affairs."⁴¹ In the article, "De Gaulle Hangs On", Le Soleil wrote,

It is tragic to see General de Gaulle trying to hang on to power. He is thus putting into practice the authoritative political philosophy which is so much his own and which is easily seen in a comment made by himself after he had left the political leadership of the country for the first time in 1946; 'If ever I return to power, I will never give it up.' Profiting from the fact that he has almost exclusive use of the state television network for his own use, General de Gaulle once again addressed the nation by this very personal means of communication [referring to the TV interview]. (42)

"The unfortunate thing for France is that the personal power to which she has had to submit for the past ten years... has ended up leading a certain number of opponents to taking extreme positions,"⁴³ said Le Soleil, putting much of the blame for the gravity of the situation in France on General de Gaulle. "So it is that the one who presented himself in 1958 as the reunifier of the nation is in the process of becoming its divisor."⁴⁴ De Gaulle's ten years in the Elysee created the conditions that led to disorders. "This seems to be...a question of a crisis of regime... provoked by the very nature of Gaullism: personal power and the authoritative regime that it entails.

⁴¹ Editorial, Le Devoir, (Montreal), "The Social and Political Crisis in France", May 22, 1968, p. 4.

⁴² Editorial, Le Soleil (Quebec), "De Gaulle Hangs On", June 11, 1968, p. 4.

⁴³ Editorial, Le Soleil (Quebec), "Elections in France", June 1, 1968, p. 4.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

[De Gaulle] treats his ministers like valets. He makes all the important decisions himself. God the Father does not owe explanations to anyone."⁴⁵

Le Soleil was especially sensitive to the role de Gaulle saw himself playing as moralizer for the world.

It would be rather funny to watch de Gaulle, who has maneuvered for the devaluation of the dollar, ... have to submit himself to the effects of the boomerang that he has thrown,.. by instigating the methods of personal power de Gaulle is probably the most responsible for the present disorder, perhaps unconsciously hoping that after him would be chaos. (46)

"He is counting on the danger of anarchy and grave disorders... in order that once more the people will rush to him as the 'savior'."⁴⁷

... for ten years, the Gaullist government has continually tried to enforce its law on practically the entire world, moralizing on what has been going on in the United States, Canada, in short, everywhere... Gaullism has been a facade... The Fifth Republic is going to have to be more modest in the future. (48)

Le Soleil saw de Gaulle as a wrecker of the Common Market. "For years de Gaulle's megalomania has practically paralyzed the evolution of this organism so necessary to Europe."⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Editorial, Le Soleil (Quebec), "Grave Malaise in France", May 21, 1968, p. 4.

⁴⁶ Editorial, Le Soleil (Quebec), "The De Gaulle Regime is Marked", May 29, 1968, p. 4.

⁴⁷ Editorial, Le Soleil (Quebec), "Referendum in France", May 25, 1968, p. 4.

⁴⁸ Editorial, Le Soleil (Quebec), "Troubles in France", A. Trembley, May 16, 1968, p. 4.

"If the Common Market is presently being trampled on, he is the most responsible for it."⁴⁹ De Gaulle would have to change his ways if this organization were to prosper, but, "...it would be easier to transform France than it would be to transform the General."⁵⁰

There is little doubt that de Gaulle was the person most responsible for the troubles in France and to a lesser degree in the rest of the world, so far as the Canadian press was concerned. The students and workers were striking out against the poor material and psychological conditions of their lives. Much of their anger was directed against the one who had for so long neglected them while he was looking after everybody else's business and was doing nothing about theirs.

"... the surprising septuagenarian... had learned at his own expense that the domestic affairs of a country must come before its foreign affairs."⁵¹ In the future he would have to take better care of the needs of his own people, leaving the rest of the world to get by the best it could.

The natural outcome of this period of French history and the best index of its meaning for the majority of the French were the parliamentary elections which were held in two rounds on June 23 and 30, 1968. Explaining once why France had so many political parties,

⁴⁹ "Referendum in France", loc. cit.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Editorial, La Presse (Montreal), "The General Has Understood Them", May 25, 1968, p. 4.

Général de Gaulle remarked, "It is difficult to gather under one roof a country that counts 265 different kinds of cheese."⁵²

The only time the French were united was during the times they were threatened by a common enemy. Knowing the nature of the French as he did, it was natural that de Gaulle saw in the Communists the threat that would unify the people behind the Gaullists. This fiercely anti-communistic campaign was difficult to understand in light of the fact that (1), in 1946, de Gaulle was the first French president to allow the Communists to participate in the government, and (2), he had actively sought closer relations with communist nations such as the USSR and Red China. Le Soleil did not think that the "blackmail by fear" would influence the voters to vote for the Gaullist candidates. "Pompidoux never ceases depicting the Gaullists as the only defense against a communist inspired revolution. The Gaullists are counting on the threat of the disorders and the fear of communism to persuade the voters to bring their massive support to the government."⁵³ Paradoxically, the Communists were a force for law and order during the riots and strikes. "Robert Callanger, president of the Communist faction in the National Assembly, was not far off when he quipped, 'law and order, that's us!'"⁵⁴

⁵² Le Soleil (Quebec), June 29, 1968, p. 1.

⁵³ Le Soleil (Quebec), June 21, 1968, p. 25.

⁵⁴ Editorial, France-Soir (Paris), "Order and the PCF", Jean Feriot, June 7, 1968, p. 4.

The Gaullists, during the campaign, tried to blame the communists for all the social unrest which the Gaullists said was fanned and sustained by them. La Presse saw de Gaulle as the chief obstacle in working out the solutions to France's social and economic problems, problems that could be more easily solved if de Gaulle resigned.⁵⁵ France-Soir felt that the parties were conducting their campaigns as if this were just another of many elections. "The speeches given so far by the leaders of the parties are not expressing the concern or the hope of a society that has been shaken to its very foundations. The political choreographers are putting on stage ballet figures that have been used for decades under different, but still second-hand, costumes."⁵⁶ "... the politicians could profit from the experience [of May]. To date the electoral campaign has shown that such is not the case. The only thing that interests them is making politics... If the electoral fight is conducted on this level, it will have done nothing to resolve the great questions put forward at the Sorbonne, in the factories, and now by the whole nation."⁵⁷

Going into the first round, the Gaullists had 199 seats in the 497 seat National Assembly, which they controlled with a one-seat

⁵⁵ Editorial, La Presse (Montreal), "Different Hypotheses", Pierre St. Germain, May 30, 1968, p. 1.

⁵⁶ Editorial, France-Soir (Paris), "A Well-Known Political Ballet", Jean Feriot, June 8, 1968, p. 16.

⁵⁷ Editorial, France-Soir (Paris), "The Buckle Is Not Buckled", Jean Feriot, June 18, 1968, p. 5.

majority in a coalition with the Independent Republicans (a small moderate party). After the first round this coalition gained 32 new seats. This trend continued for the Gaullists who, after the second round, held in their own right 254 seats, or more than half of the seats in the Assembly. The elections were a sensational victory for the Gaullists at the expense of the two leftist parties, the Federation of the Left and the Communist Party.

Reaction in the press was mostly favorable, with the possible exception of L'Humanité: "The coalition of money, hate, and fear has won out for the moment. But the contradictions... will soon be more evident and a whole lot sooner than certain people think."⁵⁸ "The unprecedented anti-Communist campaign... has made the right, the far right, and the fascists very happy... The civil war blackmail has born its fruit. The truth is that every barricade, every burnt car brought tens of thousands of votes to the Gaullists."⁵⁹

Le Figaro was happy with the results. "What man, what woman could be accused of cowardice because they undertook the fight against subversion and sabotage in their country?"⁶⁰ "The Federation and the Communists have paid dearly for their attitude during the disorders in May. The country has said 'non' to insurrection. It answered

⁵⁸ Editorial, L'Humanité (Paris), "A Start", René Andrieu, July 1, 1968, p. 1.

⁵⁹ Editorial, L'Humanité (Paris), René Andrieu, June 24, 1968, p. 1.

⁶⁰ Le Figaro (Paris), L. G.-R., July 2, 1968, p. 1.

'oui' when it was called to protect institutional legality."⁶¹

Le Monde said, "The elections have assured the triumph of an authority which last month appeared to friend and foe alike, and the general himself, to be hanging on by a thread."⁶²

The Canadian press was not enthusiastic but it was happy that order would return to France. "Frightened no doubt by the weeks of student rioting and by the amplitude of the strikes of May, the French have answered the slogan 'Gaullism or Communism'."⁶³

The significance of the elections to the French people was summarized in the front page headline of Le Soleil after the second round of the elections: "The French Opt For Stability,"⁶⁴ and one of the most difficult and dramatic periods in French history drew to an end.

⁶¹Ibid., Marcel Gabilly.

⁶²Le Monde (Paris), Sirius, July 2, 1968, p. 1.

⁶³Le Soleil (Quebec), June 25, 1968, p. 28.

⁶⁴Le Soleil (Quebec), July 2, 1968, p. 1.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The hypothesis tested in this study was that the reaction of the French and the French Canadian press to the events of May-June, 1968 would be similar because the societies in which they exist, Quebec province and France, share a common language and heritage. In testing this hypothesis the researcher examined the editorial comment of the selected dailies with regard to the six questions presented in Chapter I. These were: (1) How was the student in France (and elsewhere in the world) viewed? What were the causes of the revolt? (2) What was the reaction to the worker strike that followed? (3) How large a part did the personality of General de Gaulle play in the crisis? Was it a crisis of civilization and government's inability to maintain order? (4) What was the meaning of and reaction to the parliamentary election in June, 1968, which were brought on by the crisis? (5) How much did the political philosophy of each newspaper effect its treatment of the news and its editorial comment exclusive of any lingual or national considerations? (6) How do the Canadians view their situation as being affected by the situation in France?

These questions fall into three areas for discussion in this chapter: the student revolt and its causes, the worker strike, and the reaction of President de Gaulle to these activities and the parliamentary elections which marked the end of the period under investigation.

The author has concluded that in the first two areas (the student revolt and the worker strike) the difference in the reaction of the presses of the two countries was more of emphasis than of opinion. Concerning the causes of the student disorders, the Canadian press examined the underlying causes of the eruption -- the general conditions in the French university system that created the explosive atmosphere between the students and the university officials and the government. The comments in the French press on the causes of the student crisis tended to be more on the immediate cause of the revolt, the invasion of the Sorbonne by the police on May 3. The newspapers of the two countries did not support or attack the students and their activities along national boundaries. Some comment in both countries was pro-student and some was anti-student. The deciding factor was the general philosophy of the particular newspaper. National considerations did not seem to apply. The Canadian press observed, however, that if a similar situation should develop in Quebec with its university students it would be for reasons that students everywhere are causing unrest and not because of any quality or condition that is uniquely French and shared by the French-Canadians. The crisis in France was caused in part by a highly centralized, authoritarian, and ancient university which had become unresponsive to its students.

Both the French and the Canadian press noted that the French nation has a tradition for revolution which contributed to the development of one of the forces (the groupuscules); these far

left extremists stoked the fires of hostility between students and police. There was no indication in the Canadian press that this or any other traditional factor of the French nation (including language) was shared by the French of Canada. The author concluded that although their reaction to the student revolt was similar, the similarity was not a result of their common tongue or heritage.

Likewise, concerning the workers and their strike, the editorial comment in both countries was similar and generally sympathetic to the workers and their cause. But the Canadians did not fear that the workers in Canada would take similar action, although the two speak the same language and spring from the same roots. The Canadian press saw the nature of unionism in France as one reason why the workers of Canada were in a better position than their equals in France. The union movement in Canada has been more unified than in France with the result that the workers would tend to be in a stronger bargaining position with management. The Canadian labor force would not need to wait for worker conditions to deteriorate to the extent that they did in France before they would take action. French labor's strikes have tended to be smaller and less effective than they could have been because labor in France has not been a unified force vis-a-vis the government and industry. In 1968 conditions for the workers were poor because their past demands had not had the impact of a more united labor front. Demands were not met by industry and conditions did not improve. When the workers saw how sensitive the government was to the student riots,

they decided it was their moment to act. Even at this point it is significant to note that the strike came on gradually as workers in different parts of the country and in different industries learned of what others were doing. The movement had the strength of a unified front only after the strike had become more generalized and the CGT had taken control.

In Canada, on the other hand, labor has enjoyed a more favorable position in its dealings because of its unity. The labor situation is not so desperate in Canada as it was in France in May, 1968. The situation of the workers has been good and their strikes have not needed to be so crippling to the nation in order to force the acceptance of their demands. The Canadian press, therefore, did not fear that the workers in Canada would take actions similar to those of the French workers for reasons independent of lingual or cultural considerations.

Reaction by the press in the third area, de Gaulle and the elections, was different in the two countries. While opinion in the French press was mixed concerning de Gaulle, the Canadian press was almost completely negative. For the latter, de Gaulle was the principal cause of the disorders in France. The fact that the two countries shared the same language and heritage made this reaction even more negative -- as a result of de Gaulle's liberation speech in Quebec in July, 1967, in which he appealed to the common bonds between the Québécois and the French. Although language and heritage had no influence in the formation of similar points of

view between the French and Canadian press in the first two areas (students and workers), the effect was a negative one in this third area, causing the opinion to be significantly different. The view expressed by the two presses would have been more similar if the common bond of language and heritage did not exist.

Two factors have led to the rejection of the hypothesis: first, in one area of the investigation the editorial comment was not similar, and the common language and heritage reinforced the dissimilarity; and second, where editorial comment in the two countries was similar, it was the result of factors other than culture and language.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The author has made several observations concerning the events of May and June, 1968, in France which could be subjects for further investigation. In commenting on the activities of these two months, for example, the Canadian press devoted proportionally more space than the French to the discussion of General de Gaulle and his handling of the situation whereas the French press gave more space to a discussion of the students. Neither expended much print in an examination of French labor per se. Comments concerning the unions focused on the effects of their action, with little space given to an analysis of the workers themselves and the causes of their revolt. There appeared to be three reasons for this difference of emphasis: (1) the Canadians were not concerned that their students

would try to emulate the French students; (2) the Canadian press had stronger opinions about General de Gaulle -- probably because of his Quebec liberation speech; and (3) the French press did not tend to be as anti-de Gaulle as the Canadians -- because he represented for them one of the few forces for law and order at a time when these qualities were most needed. Some questions arise concerning this observation. How did conditions in Quebec universities at the time differ from those in France? Did the events in France produce any reform in Quebec higher education? How much of a factor was the proximity of the United States and its anti-de Gaulle sentiment in the formation of a similar sentiment in Quebec? Why was the French Communist Party rejected by the French people as a force for stability and order?

A second observation that could be the subject of further investigation concerns the results of the elections in June. The issue of law and order appeared to be a backlash from the student riots, not a reaction from the general strike which was actually more harmful to the country and had a much greater immediate and long range effect on the lives of every Frenchman. It should be remembered that those on strike prevented the rest of the people from working, whereas the rioting students affected only those in the immediate vicinity of the disorders. Also, it was the strike and not the riots that forced de Gaulle to call for new elections. Why did the rioting students distress the people more than the striking workers? Why did de Gaulle choose the French Communist

and not one of the other leftist parties to be the scapegoat for the disorders of May? Why was the Gaullists' anti-communist campaign so successful?

The author believes that these observations and questions, if examined, would have import beyond the scope of this study. Such investigations would add more knowledge and understanding to the special relationship between France and Quebec in the first case, and, in the second, offer insight into the reasons that make people behave in ways that defy logical behavior.

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