

LEP, LP ON STRIKE!

THEY WANTED TO TURN US INTO
PRATTS

....THEY BLEW IT!



WE WON'T GO
TO THE FACTORY!

LIVELY LADS, LES LASCARS, LEP ELECTRONICS...

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France Goes Off The Rails

The movements in France, November 1986 - January 1987



This text is the responsibility of B.M.Blob and B.M.Combustion, though several other people helped with some of the translations and information. This is the first text we've produced together. It may, or may not, be the last. Our specific collaboration on this does not pretend to constitute any Organisation, Association, Re-groupment, Milieu or Clique.

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Front Cover: Striking railway workers block the Canebiere (Marseille's main road) with uprooted track.

Back cover: One side of a leaflet put out in December by the striking apprentices from LEP electronics.

FRANCE GOES OFF THE RAILS

The movements in France, November 1986 - January 1987

FALSE START

NOVEMBER 1986, PARIS:

The States' anti-terrorist strategy means that almost every time you go out in the evening you're virtually sure that you'll get searched by the cops...Over the previous months, two drivers have been killed by the cops for going the wrong way down a one-way street...Even jumping the Metro ticket barriers have the cops pulling out the shooters...Paranoia...suspicion... "Two years minimum before anything could come to life".....Hell.

DECEMBER 1986, PARIS:

.....and people are beginning to talk excitedly with one another once again.

Of course, nothing's that easy, and explosions after years of repression tend to be full of confusion, which is why we've produced this: to set the record straight about what we know of these events this last winter, to help clear up this foggy mess.

Students, like the desperate times, have changed since the 60s, when there were 'bad' students there just for the grants. From '66 to '68 an active minority of them achieved a critique of the university from within. Most of the students were "good" students (and are today's cadres and leaders); nonetheless, many of them belonged to various leftist sects, and were looking forward to a confrontation with the government, in order to make their own ideology prevail. For these reasons, the students' movement could be the actual starting point of the May '68 revolutionary movement (and only the starting point: as we know, May '68 was not a students' movement). From May 3rd on a week of daily clashes with the cops provoked the sympathy of other sectors, and, on the famous May 10th 'night of the barricades', students were already a minority amongst the rioters. On the following days, students acted as a counter-revolutionary force, especially during the occupation of the Sorbonne*. But workers, marginalised youth, school kids, etc. went on to make good use of the weaknesses of the State to create a situation which went way beyond a crisis of the university, terrifying rulers everywhere.

In 1986 it wasn't a transformation of society that students even pretended to want, but the conservation of their superior intellectual/cultural niche within this society**. There are virtually no more "bad" students nowadays. The vast majority of them really want to become what a somewhat smaller majority will become: our enemies. "I'll stab you when you're my boss", someone shouted during a confrontation with them in December. They don't even fake any bad conscience about it. Probably some are just there to delay being on the dole (though in France nowadays it's a lot more impossible to depend on a grant than here), yet none of them openly expressed any criticism of their present and future condition. The chance of a critique of the university coming from students themselves are about as remote as the chance of Thatcher slitting her own throat.

Moreover, students are to be criticised, not only because of what they will become, but also because of what they already are: the most concentrated reformist force in society. They no longer pretend to be "revolutionaries" (and that's good, as it was only a pretension); they claim they are 'apolitical' - though all their leaders are former leftist bureaucrats - yet they defend directly the basic principles of politics: equality of opportunity, impartial justice, integration, culture for all, etc. Their main reference is not 1968, but 1789, date of birth of the old political lie about "liberty, equality, fraternity". They protest against the government when it does not apply its own principles (which is to say, quite often!). Students are the social basis of the new French ideology.

For instance, it was mainly students who set up, from '83 onwards, the "SOS - Racism" anti-racist movement, whose main result has been the prevention of any organised vengeance against the numerous shootings of black and arab kids by cops and petit bourgeois scum. Though they sometimes fail, particularly in the atmosphere of opposition in December: on the 7th, a young arab was shot dead by a drunk off-duty cop in a Paris suburb. This was kept secret for two days, because of what was going on then (the filth even hid the corpse!). On December 9th, SOS - Racism organised another silent and peaceful demo (they even prevented arab guys joining in because they were tough-looking). But the following night, two police stations were petrol-bombed and a police car set alight in the area.

*See 'The Beginning Of An Era' in Ken Knabbs' "Situationist International Anthology" and Viénets' "The enragés and the situationists in the occupation movement" (Viénet, however, became a professor, a nauseating role he had poured shit on in his excellent, though excessively optimistic, book).

** The aim of the Devaquet Law, the object of students' protests, was to make the universities more competitive between one another, tightening up the selection process so that would-be students had no automatic entitlement to go to the university of their choice simply because they'd passed the French equivalent of 'A'-levels (the "bac").

The students' movement has got the same aims as the anti-racist movement - more justice within this society, and it uses the same means too - gentle peaceful pseudo-carnivals - lots of degrading examples could be quoted. They were offering flowers to the CRS, explaining to them that their children were concerned too. As a demo was passing in front of La Santé prison, jailbirds shouted, "Come on, lads, smash everything up!"; a student shouted back, "We're not in '68". During a meeting, a student said she disagreed with a call to workers' unions for support, because "What shall we do if some day they ask us to support them?"

All that crap went on for 15 days, highly praised by the media. The December 4th demo was meant to be more of the same - and it was. Yet, trouble erupted at Invalides, where a concert was due to end the masquerade. It is noteworthy that nowadays political mass-meetings have to rely on Geldof-like musical or sporting shows. Political ideology has to rely on theatrical shows to be attractive. But if these shows generate passive crowds, they also sometimes provide an opportunity for hooliganism. This was the case that night. Among the estimated million people gathered at Invalides, 3 to 5 thousand youths (most of them high-school pupils) disrupted the show & systematically attacked the cops, injuring 121 of them. Obviously this had nothing directly to do with the student movement, which, from this moment on, did everything it could to stop what was going on. Nevertheless, the fact that a mass movement had begun, however insipid, privileged and safe, was an encouragement to genuine subversion, although these moments were rare.

On December 5th, students gathered in the Latin Quarter to protest against police repression (three guys had been severely wounded by grenades). No-one really knew what to do. But since the area has a symbolic significance connected with past history, something somehow had to be done. So, when someone shouted out "Let's occupy the Sorbonne!", everyone rushed into the building. The first few in started smashing windows until stopped by stewards, who then, unlike in '68, did all they could to make sure that all non-students were kept out by checking everyone's identity cards (at L.S.E., during the recent occupation against apartheid, students did the same thing: only press & officially recognised organisations could enter; opposition to apartheid in South Africa, but support for student apartheid here). Some non-students managed to get into the Sorbonne with forged I.D. cards. They then called an 'assembly', consisting of large numbers of students milling around in the courtyard. Monopolising the microphones, they asked for a vote on the following appeal: "The General Assembly of the occupied Sorbonne calls all the workers of France to show their solidarity with the struggling high-school pupils and students". Five people stuck their hands in the air. No-one voted against. They then put out leaflets throughout Paris, even sending them to contacts throughout the world, saying that the "spontaneously convened General Assembly...had unanimously voted, with enthusiasm" for the appeal. This they did under the name of 'December 5th Committee for the Generalisation of the Movement' (we've translated two of their leaflets here - 'NOW' and 'HELL'S TRAIN'). When the cops were gathering to evict the students, the very same students who'd just been keeping non-students out of the occupation, ran round the streets asking the same people they'd just kept out to support them against the filth. Naturally, they were told to fuck off. The occupation lasted three hours: a pathetic B-movie re-make of '68.

But the Latin Quarter is not only a student area. It is also one of the places where suburban youths meet, during the Friday and Saturday night stupor. Friday, they seized the moment to smash a couple of shop windows, and set a Porsche alight. This provoked the charge of motor-bike squads, during which a student was truncheoned to death.

On Saturday Dec. 6th, a silent demonstration was organised by both student and anti-racist rackets (the victim was an arab student), as a funeral of their dead (this is no cynical joke - some students actually told non-students, "He's not your dead"!). They asked the authorities that no cops should be in sight, in order to prevent any "provocation". Thousands of non-students joined the march which was due to end at the hospital where Malik had died. As people arrived there, the organisers, who didn't know what to do with all these people, decided to march on to Place d'Italie. Harlem Désir, the anti-racist leader, is reported to have said, "Let's hope they won't notice the 13th arrondissement police station in the next street". They did, and hundreds of people rushed there and pelted the CRS for some time.

Some hours later, people gathered in front of the Paris Town Hall (Chirac, as well as being prime minister, is also mayor of Paris: the Town Hall's his palace). As this was unprepared, there were only a few cops around, and at first it looked as though the crowd was about to seize the place. But they were far from the Paris Commune: student stewards linked arms in front of the demonstrators, giving time for heavy cop reinforcements to arrive. At that stage, the slogans were no longer about student reform. "Malik has been murdered", "Pasqua = Terrorist", and even "State = Terrorist".

For over a year, the spectacle of terrorism has been the most effective weapon used by the State (regardless of its' socialist or right-wing tendency) to reduce people to silence, fear and isolation. Here was the first opportunity for hundreds of people (who don't give a toss about students' problems) to react against this. After months of a continuous state of siege in Paris, punctuated by a series of "accidental" shootings and a massive law 'n' order campaign, disorder was back on the streets at



A STUDENT STUDYING LAW: MUST TRY HARDER!



"I'VE GOT MENTAL AIDS"

This is a reference to a right-wing journalist dismissing students as having "Mental Aids".

last. This was the best part of these events, a breath of fresh air. On that same night, everyone moved back to the Latin Quarter again. The CRS, who were occupying the bridge leading to the right bank of the Seine, were pelted with various missiles by some hundreds of youths for several hours, without charging back! This was a good occasion, as they had obviously been ordered not to repeat the previous days' murder/blunder - 58 more pigs were injured that night, including 3 Chief Constables. Meanwhile, cars were being overturned and set alight. These barricades didn't even have any tactical purpose, it was just for the hell of it. Then, shop windows began to fly. As it would have been difficult to carry a load of stuff away (you could just bring a souvenir back home - a teddy bear, a pair of jeans, an electric train...), looting was merely for the sheer pleasure of spoiling posh shops. For once, that ugly commercial area had recovered a human face.

However, all this was far from being an English-like riot. The street didn't belong to the rioters: they had to struggle for it all the time, against the force of the hostility of the vast majority of students. Some of the students actually tried to physically stop people from looting, but the looters fought back and the students beat a retreat. However, they kept on boring the looters with such stupid questions as "Why are you doing that?", whining about their movement not being taken into consideration by these nasty hooligans. When someone was about to set fire to a newspaper kiosk, a student intervened, saying, "Don't do that - it belongs to a worker". At that moment a guy ran up, shouting, "I work here..... burn it, burn it!". Ten minutes later it was in flames. Some students saw the looters as fascists; echoing the anti-fascist slogan of Spain '36 ("They shall not pass!"), they chanted, "The thieves shall not pass!", hoping thereby to protect the legal thieves - the shopkeepers. It should be added, however, that amongst the looters were a few students. So - no determinist bullshit about students. Some are as capable of attacking the commodity as workers or more marginalised proletarians.

On the following day, outraged reactions in the media were really over the top: Pasqua (the Home Secretary) called all good citizens to "get ready to fight for democracy", leftist journalists talked about the shop-window breakers being cop-manipulated provocateurs, union leaders urged Chirac to repeal the Devaquet Bill, as "just one spark could set everything ablaze." The nightmare of '68 was everywhere, yet it didn't have much reality. What had been going on so far? Some hundreds of people had used a reformist movement as a pretext to demonstrate their dissatisfaction. Yet they remained dependant on that pretext.

The Saturday night fever had compelled both government and students to put an end to the crisis. On December 8th, Chirac, as a good democrat, announced that the Devaquet bill was repealed. The students had won, and didn't ask for more. On Wednesday December 10th, they celebrated their victory with a massive demonstration, together with workers' unions, parents' associations, etc. As the demo was over, some hundreds of people refused to withdraw. For some days, an enthusiastic feeling of comradeship had spread throughout Paris (though it remained a feeling, as nothing more could be achieved on such an enemy ground): whether in the streets, bars or metro, you could meet and talk with strangers about anything. That night, everybody knew the occasion was over, so people just went on chatting for a while before going back underground again.



THE LATIN QUARTER, DEC.6th: Throwing back a gas cannister.

Ultimately, though, it's not what people think about the French student movement that counts, any more than what the intentions of these students were: what counts is the practical effect of Chirac's climb-down on the world. Following a not-so-mini-riot, for the State to retreat has clearly been an encouragement (though not in Little U.K., as usual). The petrol bombing of two police stations and the burning of a police car on December 10th would have been unlikely without this confidence boost. And though the initiatives towards a rail strike were already underway before the student movement (a strike call had gone out on November 11th) the railway workers, by their own admission, felt strengthened by the albeit reformist successes of the student movement. This has also been true of students in China, and especially of high-school students in Spain. And also, probably, in Mexico.*

To be sure, the reformists in France will do their best to impose their "lesson", promoting an ideology of victory through peaceful means and ends. In the run-up to the bicentenary of Bastille Day, they hope to affirm an ideology of The Peoples' Will compatible with the democratic form of commodity totalitarianism, using December '86 as a model. But are most people so easily conned by this distortion of history? Don't people know the real reasons for Chirac's compromise? As the Daily Telegraph put it, "Chirac bows down to the rioters". Against their intentions, the students encouraged a Third Force which is not so easily bought off.

That's why, a week after the students went back home, discontent in France erupted again, and on a much clearer basis, as the railway men went on a wildcat strike.

Amongst the leaflets here we have given special priority to those produced by the 16-18 year old apprentices from LEP electronics - the Lascars. Encouraged by a sussed anti-student, they were the only leaflets to make sides, by differentiating their aspirations and struggle from that of the reformist students: they've no future in this society, they are bound for the factories and they refuse it. On that basis, they expected other striking high-school pupils to join them & split from the student bullshit. However, though many high-school pupils had been involved in the clashes with the cops, they kept on following the movement. The experience of the Lascars remained generally isolated. But the leaflets were quickly recognised by those with a clearer grasp for their excellence, particularly because some dumb-fuck students, when handed them by their authors, said they couldn't understand what was written down!*

*It seems almost certain that the French events directly influenced the large student strikes in Mexico during January '87. The student protests in Mexico were marked by more explicit appeals for "university democracy" in the narrow sense of a University Congress (for the world's biggest University in Mexico City) that would be run through a directorate of students, teachers, administrators and workers. The protests were also tinged (something of a throwback) with the populist "student/worker" rhetoric of the late 60s. And like in France, the students were also protesting against reforms that would impose tougher entrance and examination standards and the growth of private universities. However feeble as regards a thorough critique of the University, the student movement did appear to have an impact on the electricity workers strike in March '87. Significant numbers of students were present, for instance, in the electricity workers demonstration in Mexico City on March 4th. In one sense at least a comparison can be made with '68 when, prior to the Olympic Games, electricity workers were amongst other workers - chiefly petroleum and railway workers and telephonists, who joined forces with the students only to be gunned down in a bloodbath when the student revolt, most definitely in this case influenced by the uprising in France, threatened to spread to other sectors. As a Guardian report said at the time (Oct.5th, 1968), "In factories too, students have been gaining support. Workers tired of union leaders being bribed by the government came to voice their opinion in student assemblies". In terms of possible repression, things now may be different. So far, the cops have kept a low profile and the army is nowhere to be seen. Following the electricity workers strike, the Institutional Revolutionary Party, which has ruled Mexico since the liquidation of Villa and Zapata's guerillas, fears a strike wave. More than in most other countries this would be of great significance because of a particularly institutionalised form of entente between unions and government (always the IRP) which dampens revolt from the outset. On a more general level, it could be said Mexico's turbulence is down to a crisis of 'westernised' Bolshevism coming hard on the heels of an acute debt crisis.

**They were swiftly translated, together with other leaflets, into Spanish and distributed to, amongst others, striking high-school pupils in Spain, where the ongoing character of the real movement has been, and still is, much deeper, and more violent, than its French counterpart. For example, in Gijon, in Asturias, on Dec.11th '86, a 5000 strong demonstration of students & high school kids was joined by football supporters/hooligans of Gijon - the "ultra-boys" (they use the English handle), who then went on to sing the Spanish version of "Here we go!". And recently, it seems, some Spanish dockers joined in one of the high school kids street riots. These riots, sometimes mini, sometimes massive, have been continuing virtually non-stop in different parts of Spain since the beginning of December. High-school strikes & riots have been continued by "uncontrollables", despite the fact that the Trotskyist-led (connected with Militant here) school students committees called off the strike.

In fact the student revolt in Spain is, to a far greater degree than in France, a revolt of dispossessed youth in general. There the high school kids are attracting marginalised youth in their thousands (c/f the following letter). And because high school kids are far less settled into a career structure the relationship between these two overlapping sectors tend to compliment one another.

Spain is a country that has never really died down and its period of quiescence can be measured in months rather than years. Moreover, the student/school kids struggles, continuing unabated in a series of strikes & riots since the beginning of Dec.'86, have had a terrific impact after they got the government to promise to spend more on education. On the industrial front since the New Year strikes involving car workers, construction workers, railway workers, miners, even the mint, have, as The Economist put it (March 28th), "spread to almost every group of Spaniards except bankers and bullfighters." In one, now famous, lovely incident a squad of paramilitary civil guards were overpowered, disarmed, and stripped naked by the people of the Basque town of Reinoso.

UNABRIDGED LETTER TO 'EL PISS', PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 31st 1987

"The Madrid press in its entirety, including yours, has accused as "ultra-rightists" us youths who participated in the disturbances during the student demonstrations on Dec.17th and Jan. 23rd.

We are youths and not, it so happens, "ultras". You had the term ultra-rightist concealed up your sleeve. I would have you know that amongst these provocateurs we find anarchists, communists, punks, skinheads, mohicans, heavys, mods, rockers, yobs and do-badders apart from the supposed ultras that you mention.

All this fauna is concentrated there not only because of student demands but also because we are fed up of unemployment, of military service, of bourgeois democracy, of police repression, of prisons, of state abuses and so many other problems which, unfortunately, today's youth are a victim of. There is no future for us, that is very clear.

State violence generates violence in the street. If our violence is unleashed it is because we endure social violence day by day. Don't be surprised then by the vandalism of the young. One might ask who is the biggest vandal here - us or the system which, unfortunately, it's our lot to live in. And don't say to us violence is never justified because in our situation violence is a must (as a certain song says). -

Lourdes Rico Martinez, Madrid.

C

"EVERYTHING CRITICIZABLE MUST BE CRITICIZED"

WE CRITICIZE!

STUDENTS, we took to the streets with you yesterday but we might as well tell you now: we don't give a shit about the Devaquet Bill!

For us selection is over, university is closed to us, our certificates lead us straight to the factory after a stretch on the dole.

As far as we are concerned, critique of the Devaquet Bill is useless:

- We criticize university,
- We criticize students,
- We criticize school,
- We criticize work.

School gives us the bad jobs.
University gives you the indifferent ones.
Let's criticize them together!

But don't tell us: "workers, road-sweepers will always be needed". Or come on lads, take those jobs. You're welcome to take them, don't be shy!

WE'RE NOT ANY MORE STUPID THAN YOU, WE WON'T GO TO THE FACTORIES!

If you criticize the Devaquet Bill which only makes a bad situation worse, you haven't understood anything! Besides, you aren't much better off than us. A good number of you (60%, we heard) will give up before graduation and these "bad" students will go straight to the shitty badly paid jobs which is our lot. As to the "good" students, they'll find out the middling jobs they'll get (you can't find the good ones at university) have lost a lot of their prestige and power. Nowadays a doctor is no longer a "Sir", he's just on the Social Security's pay-roll. And what's a teacher, a lawyer? There's so many of them..!

STUDENTS, if you criticize only the Devaquet Bill and not the university, you'll be fighting on your own and the bill will go through parliament all at once or bit by bit and then YOU'LL ALL BE FUCKED! And if by chance it doesn't go through at all everything would be just as before and half of you would end up in offices, in YOUR tidy factories.

STUDENTS, you're being called on to run this society and we to produce it.

IF YOU MOVE, IF WE MOVE, EVERYTHING CAN MOVE.

But if you just want to be like Tapie*, if all you want is to dutifully run this society and on the cheap become, social workers, team leaders, heads of personnel, executives, sociologists, psychologists, journalists, work inspectors in order to educate us, counsel us, direct us, inspect us, inform us, lead us, make us work tomorrow...

FUCK OFF!

But if to begin with you want to criticize the educational system which excludes us and debases you, if you want to struggle with us against social segregation and poverty - yours and ours - then...

BROTHERS, COME WITH US, WE LOVE YOU!

LIKELY LADS, LES LASCARS, L.E.P. ELECTRONICS

*: Very famous French "superboss" - self-made scum who built fortune and fame on taking over ailing businesses. The vulture promotes enterprising young idiots on his monthly two hour TV program. (Translators note)

THEY WANTED TO TURN US INTO PRATTS ... THEY BLEW IT!

We started walking out when the sound of the students' movement reached our ears. At first we didn't quite catch on. What were the students fighting against? We didn't know. But they were fighting against ... something and we liked that.

We took to the streets to break with the tedium of school and because we too were violently against...something! But what? Well this was still to be defined.

When we took to the streets we brought with us all we liked at school - our friends, our mates, laughs, joy, friendship. We talked to each other as never before and we really bloody enjoyed it. So school wasn't the four walls, it wasn't the curriculum? IT WAS US! ALL TOGETHER!

By speaking, running, thinking, talking, quickly, very quickly, we've understood a lot of things.

The students are fighting the Devaquet Bill which tightens the selection for university where we'll never go! Yet we know about selection! We've already been up against that. Very early, "clever" people have orientated us towards short courses at the L.E.P.'s (technical colleges). We were really made to feel we weren't good enough to do anything else and that it would be even worse after leaving school - that is, if we could find a job. We gather the "Monory Bill" is relevant to us and that it too will make things worse. Worse than what? How? We don't quite see!

Anyway we don't need to know about this bill to reject it! We no longer want what we have - it is despicable. So we're not going to ask for more or less of it. More of what? Less of what? What the hell does it change? To be more profitable for those who want to keep our noses to the grindstone? No thanks!

WE'RE NOT INTERESTED. FIND SOMETHING ELSE!

The teachers fostered in us (without much conviction) the illusion that our certificates - providing we were hard-working, punctual, attentive, conscientious - would enable us to find a position, oh, not a brilliant one, but a position nonetheless. They had us believe our studies would condition our place on the labour market. It seems to us instead that our future job already conditions our education.

SOUNDS PROMISING, DOESN'T IT?

We thought we could get away from it through music, travel, theatre, friendship, that kind of thing...; that we'd manage somehow, without knowing how to escape. Meanwhile we just kept quiet in order not to offend them, not to annoy them... but also because deep inside, we knew we were stuck, alone, isolated.

Now we know: it wasn't a personal or individual problem, It's our problem - all of us!

By refusing school, passively yesterday, actively today; it is work and the shitty lives they'd nicely prepared for us we refuse!

We talk, we think, we laugh, YET WE'RE VERY SERIOUS.!

You nearly got us; you blew it!

We've caught a glimpse of something else, we're gonna go all out, the shit's gonna fly!

LIKELY LADS, LES LASCARS, L.E.P. ELECTRONICS

TEACHERS YOU PUT YEARS ON US !

For such a long time you wanted us to speak but we kept quiet, this time we are going to speak up. We know the majority of you sincerely want to help us. Each in your own way have tried everything. You have been strict or easy-going, patient or impatient, attentive or distant. You have thought about things, talked matters over between yourselves, with us, with the college administration.

You have told us so many things, we said nothing or very little, we'd keep quiet, we'd smile. You used to say to us: "It's no laughing matter, get on with your work" or, "we have a laugh here but we work really hard", or even "if you don't intend doing anything don't interfere with your friends who..." or, "make an effort", or, "Mr so and so do you think you'll be allowed to turn up late for work?" or "oh it's you, get back in your place". Or, "answer doesn't anyone know?" or, "well, in 10 years of teaching I've never come across anything like this before" or, "if you have a problem come and see me at the end of the lesson" or, "come on now, ask some questions!" and "I also have a daughter of your age", "keep quiet when I'm talking", "take a sheet of paper" and "repeat what I've just said", "come on find me a piece of paper" and "I warn you I'm not like what's his name".

Well, you're wrong. It's all the same - you've tried hard but that hasn't changed a thing. You have given us your advice, you've seen our parents, you've said: "if it were my son". You've worked hard, gone back to the beginning, prepared courses, arranged visits, trips, provided summaries, prepared days out. We've drunk coffee together, you've gone on strike, shouted and bawled and maybe even cried but that hasn't changed a thing.

Year after year, the social meat grinder has devoured us. You wear the pupils you've saved like medals - they are well deserved, each one of us has cost you plenty. But that's not possible with everyone.

Neither you nor we were the problem, it is everything else.

To be sure, you knew it but you probably thought it was inevitable. It's not the failure of the school system we reproach you with but for having accepted for too long and trying to make us accept too, a state of affairs, of people and of relationships between people, which are unacceptable.

To you we're problem kids, you felt sorry for us in advance - as if your life was something marvellous. We can see well enough how you react, how you are also fed up.

- You say: "What have you done with yourselves?" Well to be exact, because of what we're doing today we criticize our former passivity.

- You say: "That's unfair, our lives aren't a misery, we don't do as we're told, we want to help you".

Prove it! You want to talk to us? We wouldn't understand you all that well, we're already out of earshot, come closer; if you don't, in a weeks time you'll not have the foggiest clue.

Before our passivity was your excuse (not any more). YOU CAN'T HELP LIKING US, WE STATE THE TRUTH, a heart felt truth that people are fed up with hierarchical relationships, with separation, with a cramped narrow life. You daren't say so or even believe it. But that's what it boils down to. Teachers - that's the hurdle you must leap - but if you don't help, if you give up, if you betray nothing, we won't say a thing. Our looks will speak for us. They're unrelenting, as you well know. You'll be the judge of yourselves - there's no reprieve from that. Come and discuss with us on an egalitarian basis.

YOU CANNOT DO ANYTHING AGAINST US, WE STOP YOU GETTING OLD.

LIKELY LADS, LES LASCARS, L.E.P. ELECTRONICS



... BASTARDS!
TO OUR JUST CRITIQUE
YOU REPLY WITH
THE CANE...!!!!
...NOW YOU'LL SEE...!!!

WHAT TO DO ?

Over the last few days many things have been happening in the streets and in our heads, we've got to know each other better, we've been thinking, we've discovered a lot of things. We must talk about all this. We are strong because we are many and stand together. And we stand together because despite our personal history and our unique identity, our experience has been the same and our future is the same.

We must talk between ourselves to clarify everything: what we want, what we don't want any more, why we took action in the first instance and how to carry on. We need a place to do this; we've found it: it's our school. It's ours, they've said so time and time again. We take it at face value and the school too.

Then we need to organize and unite around what we want. Define who are our friends and get closer to them, who are our enemies and brush them aside.

We think we must rapidly get close to other LEPs who are in the same boat as us, but also to all the youth and older people already at work or on the dole because "they're us and we're them". A few months or years ago they were where we are; if nothing changes, we'll be in their position in a few months or a few years.

We think we must join forces with the students, but on a clear basis, stating who we are, what we want and impell them to clarify their position (see: "We criticize!").

We think we have things to say to our teachers, some nice, some not-so-nice, for instance that if they can teach us some things, there are other things they should learn or re-learn from us.

We think we have a lot to say about work, i.e. about money, and as money is at the heart of society and weighs on the entire society we therefore have to say it to the entire society and first of all to our parents.

So here is what we propose. First we occupy the school, organize it and talk between ourselves. When once agreed on certain essential things, we'll go and meet other LEPs to do with them what we'll already have done together. Then we join the students in the streets on an equal basis. This is just a start...

To start the discussion we have prepared leaflets and we propose to talk about them in order to improve them, modify them, turn them inside out and/or write others. We want others to contribute and that everybody, teachers and staff included, has a say. We want a wide open debate with no taboo. Everyone will have an equal right to speak. Now is the time to dare to say everything. But be warned - we won't tolerate any trade-union, party, petty chief or bureaucrat. Let it be known !

One last point. It is in the college administrations' interest, who can't stop us from acting, to let us roam around outside like uncaged animals, hoping we'll get tired. If they refuse to allow the occupation, if they hassle us, we'll know what to think of them. And we'll remember ! We'll go somewhere else (we know where) and they won't see us again so soon !

LIKELY LADS, LES LASCARS, L.E.P. ELECTRONICS

SOME GRAFFITI TAKEN FROM THE WALLS OF PARIS, BEGINNING OF DECEMBER

- We've all been infected with mental Aids*: it's normal, considering the time we've spent being fucked by the government.
- May in December - that's brill.
- Cadillac arrest on Saturday.
- On Sunday, the day of our Lord, the CRS don't work. We're looking forward to next Sunday.
- Have you seen my Alpine? [written the night cars were burnt on Saturday 6th December]
- The only freedoms we possess are those the government can control the use we put them to.
- And if we did re-make the world....
- Isolated...killed off
- We want an explosive scandal and to explode ourselves (LEP school apprentices).
- Be cruel.
- Open the prisons.
- Pasqua has done a bunk underground - the youth have taken Paris.
- Beneath the tarmac, the pavement**.
- Grassing is a crime. Pasqua's a terrorist [on ads appealing for witnesses].
- CRS - your neighbour's fucking your wife.
- Pasqua - it's not you, but the street which makes the law.
- 5 cars are blocking the street, today they open the debate.
- Tonight all Paris must be outside communicating.
- If you remain all your life crushed and exploited, then you'll understand the reaction in the streets.
- Press mess.
- Another cross drawn up on the pigs' slate, shivers run down my spine.
- Anger must come before something I find hard to be precise about [placard of an arab on the 10th December demonstration].
- Paris belongs to us.
- Me cold? Never!
- Open your eyes, switch off the telly.
- Time shall not pass.
- The same wave rushes through the English streets & ghettos (& in all Europe) but the international media won't tell you about it because they're afraid of our strength. Therefore, English 'jeunes' send you strength, support and eventually victory. [written in English]
- Non-strikers are 'Les Misérables' [on a statue of Victor Hugo].

*Reference to a right-wing journalist who said that students were suffering from mental Aids.

**Reference to graffiti in May '68: "Beneath the pavement, the beach". After '68 paving stones were covered with tarmac to prevent them being dug up and used as missiles.

EMERGENCY STOP

From the end of November '86 to mid-January '87, all the defenders of the State stirred up the spectre of May '68. Students declared "68 is old, 86 is better!" and the Minister of Police appealed for the building of vigilante groups to "defend the Republic". The press described a crazy Chirac watching De Gaulles' '68 dissertations on video... And when the train-drivers' wildcat strike began to extend itself, the government declared that there wouldn't be any new "Grenelle Agreements" (these agreements were the crumbs that the State threw to the 10 million strikers in '68 and which the unions exerted themselves in passing off as a victory even though the movement was threatened by military intervention). In the final days of the railway strike, when other sectors were also involved in movements of agitation, the RPR boss (Chirac) called for an anti-strike demonstration, wanting one just like the Gaulist one at the end of May '68.

Up until then, the various States had always tried hard to make all traces of social revolution disappear, attempting to impose amnesia. The modern spectacle, on the other hand, maintains falsified memories. The social agitation at the end of '86 - beginning of January '87 had absolutely nothing in common with the wildcat general strike of '68. But the State has ceaselessly evoked a similarity. It was a question of falsifying a real threat by giving it an unreal dimension, of imposing confusion. This State strategy was destined to occupy and invade minds in order to ruin the novelty and the modern character of the situation.

If the State seemed to retreat - at the beginning of December, vis-a-vis the student conflict - it was because what was seized in this inoffensive agitation was the pretext for a general dissatisfaction to be expressed. The State wanted to cut this short by abandoning, to the students, a derisory victory. It was in this climate - where the feeling was that something had changed - that the railway workers went on strike.

The SNCF (National Society of Railways) is an enterprise with over 50% of its capital nationalised. Its private shareholders, not being a majority, have the incomparable advantage of never losing any money: the State agrees to cover any drop in the revenue from their shares.

This national enterprise is one of the major union strongholds in the country. The CGT (affiliated to the stalinist party) is deeply rooted there. Also present are: the more modernist CFDT, a nest of self-management ideology, infested with social democrats, priests and leftists; Force Ouvrière (Workers' Strength), whose general secretary, Bergeron, regularly makes alarmist warnings to the authorities; also, some so-called 'autonomous' corporatist unions, like FGAAC, hardly powerful, except amongst the drivers.

The SNCF is considered in France as an enterprise in permanent deficit: over the last ten years it's lost over half the volume of its commodity transportation to road transport.

For two years, the Society has offered redundancy payments proportional to the years worked: 20 to 30 thousand francs (2 to 3 thousand pounds) for less than 5 years, and around 120,000 francs (£12,000) for 15 years. Already, 20,000 people have left, with 40,000 more planned over the next 4 years. On the other hand, the SNCF doesn't employ any new people and intensifies the pressure to take the anticipated redundancies.

It is clear that the State wants to make this enterprise profitable by "modernising" it, studying projects for the privatisation of certain sectors. For the employees who are already overworked in this particularly hierarchical enterprise (some say it's even worse than the army), this push to modernise is connected with an aggravation of their work conditions.

This strike was remarkable for the rapidity and the magnitude of its extension. There were close to 180,000 strikers out of 230,000 employees, during the strongest moments of the strike. The press never revealed its real extent. From the very first days the strike spread like a trail of gunpowder. The social partners (the State, the bosses and the unions), who said they were ready to meet each other, found themselves impotent in the face of the sudden uncontrolled development of work-stoppages.

At the beginning of November '86, a non-union driver on the Paris Gare du Nord network put into circulation a petition demanding the amelioration of the drivers' work conditions and the suppression of a project for a gauge of salaries based on promotion by merit (the petition also threatened the unions with "suffering the consequences" if they didn't support the strike). The petition rapidly received over 200 signatures. Only the CFDT, whose presence amongst this category of employee is virtually insignificant, agreed to announce a strike for the 18th December. Very quickly, several depots in Paris & the provinces walked out on strike illegally, without previous announcement.

From December 20th the "sedentaires" (those not working on the trains - ticket office employees, workshop workers, platform workers, office workers, etc.) joined up with those who work on the trains. The strike of "sedentaires" was massive and the media was especially silent about it.

The strikers were determined to wreck the project of a gauge of salaries and promotion through merit since such a project made increased salaries even more uncertain than they had already been with the old gauge (where the waiting lists for promotion are very long): promotion would be dependant on the degree of docility and submission towards ones hierarchical superiors. "They want us to bow before the office boss, they want us to be arse-lickers" (a striker). For the "sedentaires", who get paid less than those who work on the trains, the problem of increases in salary was posed in a more crucial way. Speaking generally, there haven't been any increases for 2 years in the public sector and Chirac's famous "privileged" have the privilege of working for the SNCF for a wage close to the national legal minimum wage level or for a little bit more thanks to nights, Sundays and public holidays spent grafting. Such are the obligations of being a 'public service'!

The different strike committees and the numerous general assemblies called from the first week for the co-ordination of different sectors and strike areas in order to develop a better circulation of infor-

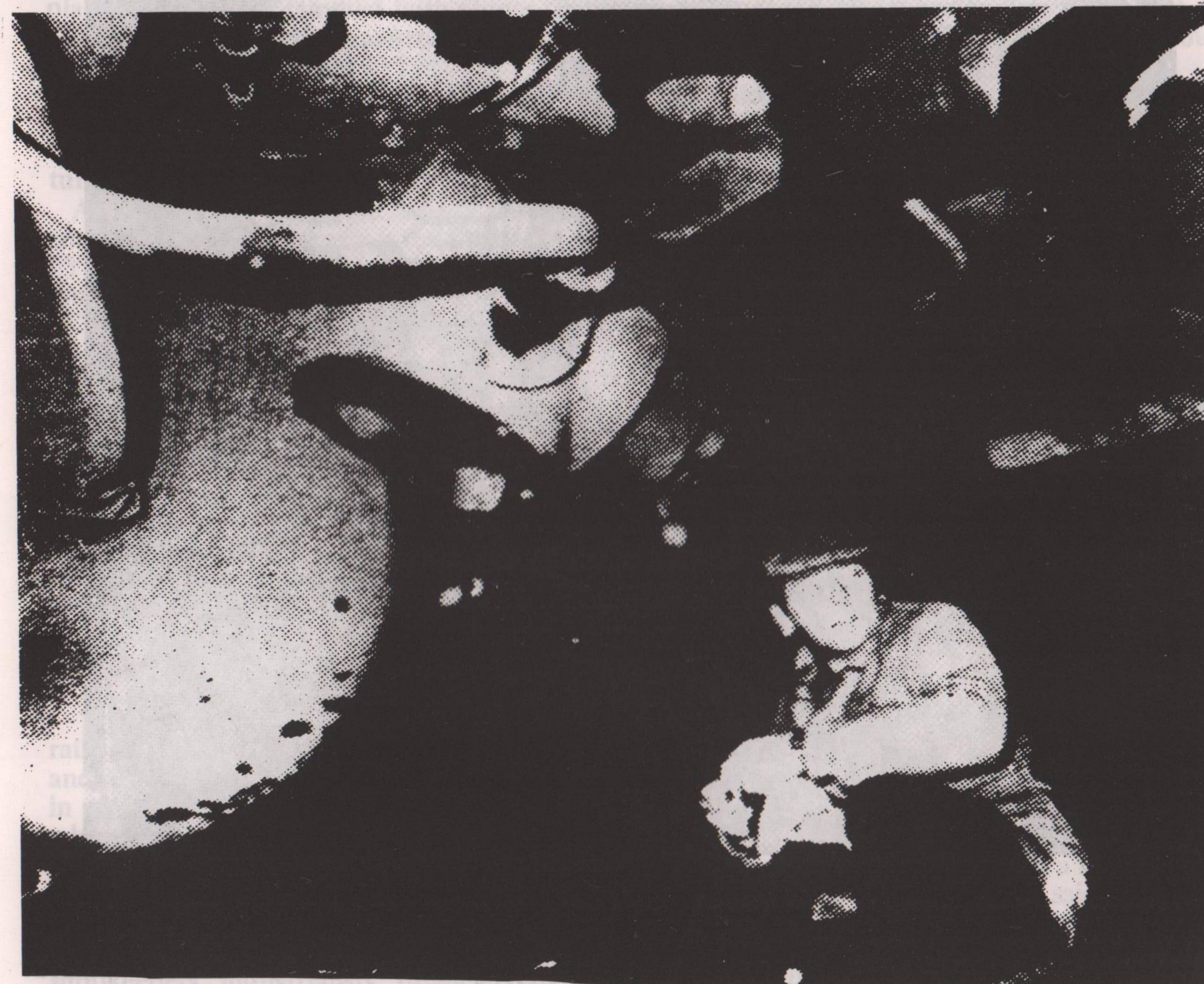
mation and a more effective use of their strength. The will to organise themselves directly, without union intermediaries, was the characteristic of the first assemblies. In contrast with what had generally happened in the past, it wasn't the unions appealing to the assemblies and the assemblies thus submitting to their initiatives and decisions but the railway workers, unionised or not*, who appealed to the assemblies.

In some depots (and always at Paris Nord), stalinists were kicked out. This suspicion towards the unions was, to a great extent, due to the various intrigues of the past, and particularly to the useless and exhausting "sausage" strikes, the CGT speciality, consisting of 24 or 48-hour strikes to demand a bonus, the equivalent of which was deducted from one's salary, whether the bonus was granted or not. In the past, some movements, independant of the unions, like the wildcat strike of '84 (see the french text "Décontrôle d'aiguilles") was sabotaged by the union apparatus.

But though there was a suspicion towards the unions and a will to control the strike through assemblies, this strike wasn't anti-union. Very quickly, the wishes of certain strikers to not use the unions, even as a means of negotiating with the management, found themselves confronted with the refusal of the management, whose only intention was to negotiate with the elected union representatives. The National Co-ordination of train drivers and the Inter-categorical Vitry Co-ordination** quickly fell into agreeing to use the unions as simple organs for transmitting information between management and themselves, affirming their will to control them rigorously: for this reason they were called "taxi-unions".

At Paris-Nord the train drivers were so united they didn't see any need to hold assemblies or to vote on whether to continue the strike. Elsewhere, either through a show of hands, or a secret ballot, voting took place everyday showing everywhere a massive majority for continuing the strike throughout its duration.***

In the assemblies, delegates were appointed to form representatives from different stations and railway depots in the co-ordinating network. With some it was clearly stated that the delegates were revocable but with others the question did not seem to arise. Some strikers criticised the very principle of delegation as possibly constituting and becoming another form of power.



A driver of a goods train notes that the brake mechanism has been sabotaged by a hit squad at Belfort.

*In the numerous assemblies, and more particularly of those who worked on the trains, it was demanded that unionised workers must participate in their own personal capacity.

**A Trotskyist-led co-ordination for all categories and all grades of railway workers. (T.N.)

***This footnote is on the bottom of the next page.

Militants of every description - from leftists to traditional trade unionists, or those breaking from trade unionism, even some non-unionised elements - sought to imprison, in some neo-trade-unionist formula, all the excitement, the searching, the working out of new modes of struggle stirring within people. They were hoping an occasion would arise enabling them to seize control of this movement, which was altogether new in France.

Sectional differences persisted throughout this strike. In certain depots drivers found it hard to tolerate the presence of station staff in their midst - on the pretext that they were under union control, that they'd been late coming out or that their demands were different and likely to swamp theirs'. Often, even in the same railway stations, different general assemblies were held separately comprising station staff, drivers and guards. Then, after each assembly had been held, there would be mutual consultation to ascertain the results of the voting and what actions had been proposed. This did not prevent different categories of railway workers at Montparnasse, Gare de Lyon and St Lazare from setting up joint picket lines on the tracks.

In this new situation, in which everything remained to be discovered, the strikers found themselves confronted with the weight of the past and the sly manipulators of old ready to re-group at the merest hint of a weakening. During one of the last assemblies, a striker at the Gare St Lazare cannily observed, "At the outset, the general assembly has been the movements' strength but it has not known how to go forward." And if, in the beginning, particularly among station staff, the assemblies were not called by the unions, the latter quickly entered and controlled them - or tried to. At Montparnasse, the CGT took it in turns to read out long statements (which strikers referred to as the "Mass") designed to lull the assembly to sleep and, through never-ending abstract generalities, to tire people out.

But if the CGT did not fill the assemblies with enthusiasm, on the whole meeting with the strikers' indifference (apart from where they were in the majority, as in some towns in the South) anti-stalinists and others who well understood what their game was and didn't like it, were not able to launch a counter-offensive. By the same token, sectional archaisms and the general dismissive behaviour of drivers towards others who were not 'drivers' must count as a factor which limited the movement.****



A picnic for the New Year. A railway buffet for strikers.

***Unfortunately, in at least one station even a formalistic notion of democracy was not respected: towards the end of the strike, a sizeable minority voted to go back to work. When asked if they would respect the wishes of the majority, these would-be scabs said they wouldn't, that they'd cross the picket lines. Instead of violently confronting these scum, the assembly had a re-vote manipulated by the CFDT union, and voted overwhelmingly to return to work. (T.N.)

****Example: some strike supporters reproduced 3000 copies of an appeal to other workers put out by the Inter-categorical Co-ordination (see page 23). They then went along to Gare Austerlitz, where this Trotskyist-dominated Co-ordination was especially influential, and showed the leaflets to various drivers. They were completely indifferent, saying that the leaflets, though addressed to workers, unconnected with the SNCF, were meant purely for internal SNCF consumption. They then accused them of being police provocateurs and forced them to run for their lives. (T.N.)

The State responded decisively by refusing to give an inch, insisting meanwhile that the strikers were only seeking a wage increase (once the merit wages system had been dropped in anticipation of a new project which will be carried out jointly with their social partners - i.e. bosses and unions). In fact, the strikers had primarily drawn attention to their working conditions. Only station staff had emphasised a wage increase - however, this never received any mention....

The tendency towards self-organisation by the strikers came up against the State's intransigency, which, above all, had to combat and destroy this threat. In order to impose a trade-union presence the SNCF board put forward unacceptable negotiating pre-conditions such as the immediate resumption of work. Seguin, the Employment Minister, was able to state at the time "the present struggle demonstrates the opportunity that exists in a country like ours to avail itself of strong, responsible unions." The State, surprised initially by the wildcat character of the strike, quickly resorted to dragging things out, convinced a long strike would exhaust, perhaps indefinitely, the strikers' combativity. They waited until the evening of December 31st before announcing the projected system of "merit wages" had been withdrawn and that subsequently negotiations on working conditions were underway.

The railway workers are not students. The entire rail network, as well as station and main crossover points had by then been occupied by picketing railway workers. Stalinists in the CGT proposed (in vain) that strikers take out strike-bound trains so that stranded holiday makers could return home. As a pretext they used the strikers unpopularity from the word go. Ensuring the "sacrosanct right to work" the cops descended on pickets, evicted strikers from occupied railway stations and went so far, in some places, as to check passengers' tickets (often passengers queuing for tickets were surrounded by armed riot cops). At the Gare de Lyon, strikers blockaded the booking office shouting, "It's free, it's free" (see the railway workers leaflet, "Railway workers appeal to passengers", page 23). Confronted with the impossibility of mounting picket lines and maintaining the occupations, numerous acts of sabotage (it would be more precise to call them acts disrupting the movement of rolling stock) took place: points were jammed with stones, lights were left at red, signal boxes were put out of action by removing essential equipment. Hit squads of strikers brought trains to a halt in the open countryside and brakes were sabotaged.

But the angry railway workers knew it would be difficult subsequently to gain a victory. The State does not treat workers like it treats future managers, which is what students are. As the strike began to crumble it was the Stalinists who appeared to be going the whole hog. This uncompromising comic turn was meant to give the impression that they were the most radical.

Against all the odds, the railway workers have gone back to work in a mood of confidence strengthened by the exemplary nature of their movement and their experience. As some of them have asserted, "You see, we didn't win anything but we created a precedent by showing we were capable of leading a long hard strike outside the union."

Through its exemplary quality the movement has created in this country an incomparable precedent.

This period is characterised by a desire to make out that employed workers are privileged, just as previously they wanted to make out they were free individuals. This privilege up to now was linked with the inevitability of poverty and was successively described as necessary and inevitable. But during this strike this pseudo-fatality was shown to be both a plea and a threat in the mouths of State officials. The lie stands revealed - a weapon forged to contain the dissatisfaction of the poor. The State banked on an unpopularity which might have left the strikers isolated. It didn't turn out as they'd hoped. When the railway strike was hardening at the beginning of January, other sectors (buses and metro in Paris, seamen, electricity, gas and postal workers) went on strike. The confusion which surrounded these strikes, a confusion largely wrought by the Stalinists, reduced their scope but did not succeed in totally obliterating revived notions of self-organisation. Railway workers who set about collecting money in railway stations received, in a short space of time, considerable sums*****.

The consensus which reigned as far as students were concerned was not to be had when it came to railway workers. In November-December all the shitheads imaginable vied with each other to eulogise and proffer advice to students. In January, it was the exact opposite. During a demonstration in Paris in an office district it was astonishing to see the way in which middle-management insulted the strikers whilst employees, on the contrary, cheered them.

The media, so full of praise a month previously, now made many an enemy. In a railway depot, some journalists on the look out for news to falsify were approached by a bloke who said to them, "If you want to talk to someone just stay put - I'll go fetch my dog."

As to the discontent and unpopularity this strike provoked, it clearly came from middle managers, shopkeepers, industrialists, financiers and politicians - all that miserly scum, as our fellow 'Enragés' described them in 1793.

La, Lou & Al.
Paris, beginning of February '87.

(translated from a French text received from some people we know in Paris; the title is ours')

*****Unfortunately, there were very few collections, which must have been a factor in bringing the strike to an end, considering the railway workers had absolutely no strike pay. (T.N.)

FOOTNOTE.

The following contains some very brief information on other strikes in France....

During December: angry small farmers demonstrations resulted in the Government giving away £200 million in special quotas to offset new EEC rules. Strikes by merchant seamen, dockers, journalists, metro (underground) workers.

December 24th: fear of a strike in the French civil service.

December 29th: seamen's strike escalated and brings most Atlantic and Mediterranean ports to a full stop. On the same day, electricity and gas workers who, for some time, had had planned for them a union-run strike pressurised union bosses to bring forward the date.

January 4th: the CGT, with its customary "knowing how to end a strike" methods, calls off the month-long seamen's and dockers' disputes. The call was, more or less, obeyed.

January 5th/6th: bus and metro workers strike on and off. Brief and patchy strikes by munitions, dockers and postal workers (e.g. at Paris' Rue du Louvre Post Office, only 200 out of 2000 were on strike). Ports of Marseille, Nantes, St. Lazaire and Bordeaux are closed again by dockers. These strikes are very much separated from each other, hugely dominated by the unions and largely fall into the 24-hour ritual - a ritual deeply resented by not only railway workers. Also round about this time, seamen chuck some containers into the docks at Marseille, which the dockers refuse to pull out. Also, a gun is fired by seamen at dock security guards, though no-one's wounded.

January 9th: gas and electricity workers nonetheless extend strike action with the half-hearted support-cum-hostility of the unions against some of the more imaginative actions. There were many power cuts. Theoretically electricity industry management control the supply network but they're dependant on many other factors - not least, the mood of the electricians themselves. They can, for instance, reduce the speed of the generators to the lowest possible level at hydro-electric and nuclear power stations (indeed, at this time, there was some strike action by nuclear power workers). And by cutting supplies at electricity sub-stations, strikers, through this form of wildcat power, were able to target specific places (e.g. in Paris, notably at Gare du Nord, Gare du L'Est and La Defense). Nonetheless, management, in their well-guarded control rooms, were able, in this bitterly cold weather, to direct many cuts, knocking out supplies to homes and streets in the poor districts, keeping factories, big stores, State Departments, etc. well-supplied. In one provincial town, striking electricity workers managed to occupy one control room, but were quickly ejected by riot police.

January 12th: after a few days skirmishing, trouble breaks out in the pits in northern France over the Governments' draconian plan to rationalise still further the coal industry. There was strike action in a few pits. Prior to the strike wave, Carmoux miners had been on strike over a threatened pit closure. The French Coal Board backed down and agreed to defer closure for a year....With the collapse of the railway workers, all the rest of the activity, for the time being, has mostly fizzled out.



Nuclear Power Striker having a ruck on the picket line, France, Jan.'87. Increasingly, nuclear power workers world-wide are beginning to take action (e.g. Sellafield, Chernobyl, the Indian sub-continent...). It's a welcome development. However, there are problems to it. More recently, the Doel nuclear power station in Belgium has been on strike for a few weeks in a dispute over pay, conditions and holidays. Management working 12 hour shifts has tried to break the strike. In that time, the plant, which has 4 reactors, has had 3 emergency shut-downs. Surprise, surprise - management say it's part of the normal course of events and not due to their incompetence. Considering their unlimited opportunism, however, they could easily change their tune. Seeing that management usually don't give a toss anyway, they might indeed welcome a limited nuclear accident during a strike in order to curb the increasingly restive spirit of nuclear power workers. More generally, where there's industry with a higher organic technical composition of capital, one is seeing during strikes the gradual emergence of management work-forces (print, TV, Telecom, etc.) which, if not as effective as made out, nonetheless quite severely demoralises strikers. How to overcome this obstacle remains to be seen. Specifically for nuclear power workers, they're put in a difficult situation. Short of a fortress-like occupation which prevents any access by cops, thus enabling them to shut down the reactor, they cannot resort to sabotage because of the dangers of nuclear fall-out, to the same degree as many other workers.

January 10th: Growth of a backlash against the strikes by shopkeepers, small business people, sub-contractors etc. Anti-strike demos in Lyons, Lille, Marseille and other cities. It parallels greater splits in the railway workers ranks. Gare du Nord says it will "fight to the bitter end". Others like Chambéry at the foot of the Alps vote to return to work.

Small proprietors in France have a tradition of being more virulently pitted against the proletariat than in the U.K. A difference: English shopkeepers probe for your opinions first before saying anything leading, but French shopkeepers just let fly with their ghastly prejudices. Likewise, they have no qualms about searching you if they're suspicious - even when you've not even thought of nicking anything. Though the class system in the U.K. is more archaic and antediluvian than the French class system, nonetheless, small proprietors here offer very little resistance when faced with a riotous onslaught on their property and position, quickly giving up in disgruntled despair. Though here they look to the State for protection, this is very blinkered since they receive very little or no economic compensation, and in the inner-city areas, insurance companies increasingly offer no protection or their premiums are so high that few shopkeepers can afford them. In France, since the riots there in '81 (mainly in Lyons) the State has adopted a low profile towards nicking, whilst surreptitiously encouraging the "petites commercants" to directly shoot down thieves. In France, the petit bourgeoisie protects the State and does not see itself as protected by it. After all, in 1789 their actions created the beginnings of the modern French State.



Notice on shop wall, Jan.'87: "BECAUSE OF BEING IMPEDED IN OUR FREEDOM TO WORK We request the strikers from the State sector to abstain from frequenting our establishment."

SNCF: A "PROFITABLE" ENTERPRISE
OR A GENUINE PUBLIC SERVICE ?

THE CHOICE IS OURS...

As public transport users we are inconvenienced by the railway strike. But that must not blind us to what's at stake in the railway workers' struggle: they are combatting an unswerving regime which is being imposed on everyone to the sole benefit of a privileged minority.

They are parading the incredible privileges of railway workers before us. In so doing the government is trying to set people, whose wages and living conditions are broadly comparable, against each other. The job of a railway worker (rosters, nervous exhaustion, responsibilities) completely tears to shreds any private life, to the point of reducing a railway workers life expectancy to between 56/57. Day and night, a train driver is single-handedly responsible for the lives of hundreds of passengers.

The system the SNCF is attempting to impose would not only worsen conditions overall but, by the same token, would endanger the safety and comfort of travellers. We are conscious of the fact that they're not merely defending their particular interests, but are coming to the defence of an excellent public service. A victorious strike by railway workers would swiftly put a stop to the overall deterioration in workers conditions and to increasing unemployment.

We support the railway workers strike because they were able to stay united: it is the base which daily decides what action to take and, through their respect for democracy, they show their strength and determination.

The Co-ordinating Body of Passenger-Railway worker Solidarity
Committees - Paris and outlying districts.
Postal address: 25, rue du Moulinet, 75013.

Printed on the reverse side of this leaflet:

WHO ARE THE RAILWAY WORKERS WHO ARE INCONVENIENCING US?
WHAT DO THEY WANT?

At the heart of the strike are the railway workers uneasy about their future and the future of the railways.

Whether drivers or not they are often on call and on duty at a moments' bidding.

Thus, for example, train drivers, at the beginning of their careers and some right up to retirement, are bound by the "signal" or "on call" statute. That means, they can be ordered out at any moment to take a train to any destination. They are told what their rostered schedule is only on a day-to-day basis, travelling anything from 40 to 400 kilometres. Without any prior notice, they are ordered out of bed to work nights (for an additional 2.67 francs - 27p - an hour) or Sundays.

Given these conditions, how can you bank on having a private life at all?

One of them, in 25 years, has only spent 9 christmases at home. Every month they spend from 4 to 11 nights in dilapidated, noisy hallways of station post-offices, taking with them bedding and eating utensils. Already it's enough to make you really pissed off.

In trying to impose a new "wages" gauge" the SNCF management has subjected the entire labour force to a further degradation of living and working conditions.

For the time being, this "wages gauge" has been withdrawn, but the SNCF board always keep seeking to introduce it through the growing part played by "merit" in the system of promotion. "Merit" means devotion to duty, docility, being "amenable to orders" as an SNCF senior official put it.

This subjection reinforces the obligation to make the company instantly profitable and facilitates the reduction of the workforce.

8,000 jobs per year have gone since 1983. The result: more and more ticket offices closed, only one waiting room in the vast foyer of the Gare du Nord, one guard per train...

What comfort and security can travellers expect if jobs continue to disappear at this rate?

RAILWAY WORKERS APPEAL TO OTHER WORKERS

WORKERS,

As you know, we railway workers are on strike. Many of you have perhaps had your lives disrupted by this strike. Yet it goes without saying that this strike is not aimed at you nor transport users in general. Nor, it goes without saying, is it aimed at workers because like you we work for a wage.

If we have resorted to strike action it is because it is the only way we have of making our demands known to our employer - the government. Like all employers - yours included - it has held our wages down and has long made our working conditions worse by all manner of means. It has reduced the number employed (SNCF - the state railway system - has got rid of 10,000 jobs per annum) has made economies in matters of safety (the number of fatal accidents at work per year runs into several score on the SNCF) and increased the work load.

However formulated, our demands are simple : they are about wages and working conditions. And if we have demanded we be paid for the time we have spent on strike, all workers will understand why strikers are faced with this predicament. Because it is the bosses who have forced us out on strike through their determination to always add to our exploitation and why should workers constantly sacrifice themselves?

Our strike has panicked the SNCF management board, the government and also over and above that, all bosses. It has created panic because once a section of workers, no matter who they may be, stops work and engage in struggle, this terrifies all bosses because the effect is felt on social and economic life.

But it also causes panic because of its particular character. It had been set in motion by the base, that is, by the rank and file workers either non-unionised or belonging to unions of different tendencies. It was they - the base - which extended the strike nationwide. And it is the base which in many places has taken over the organisation and running of the strike, all decisions being reached in general assemblies which group together all workers whether unionised or not. Equally, the strike committees elected in the general assemblies are composed of unionised and non-unionised workers.

What they fear most, as the reactions of those who exploit and govern us have shown, is workers deciding what to do in every instance and acting accordingly.

Workers,

We railway workers appeal to you because we firmly believe you have the same demands and aspire to do the same.

We appeal to you because we firmly believe our fate is wedded to yours and to that of all other waged workers. We have jointly suffered over the years - ultimately in the same way - the same attacks on our living and working conditions and on our wages. By standing together we have a chance to change the course of things and turn the boat the right side up.

We railway workers appeal to you because we firmly believe our strike is in your interest and in the interest of all workers and that our struggle today will lend force to yours' tomorrow. Better still, that we all join forces and dictate the legitimate demands of wage earners.

The Inter-categorical National Co-ordination of striking railway workers.

The Inter-categorical National Co-ordination of railway workers and the National Co-ordination of Train Drivers call all railway workers to gather before the Gare d'Austerlitz, Tuesday 13 January at 5 p.m. to demonstrate the resolve of the strikers and show the strike is continuing. It also calls on workers and the populace at large to come and affirm their solidarity with railway workers.

12th January 1987

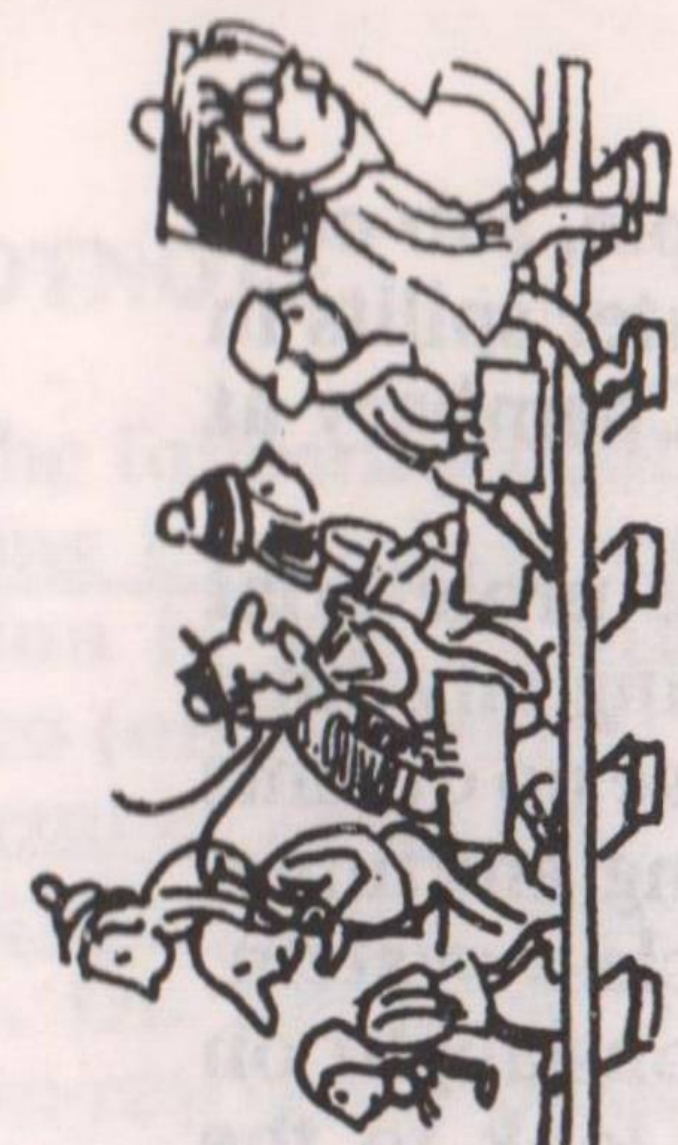
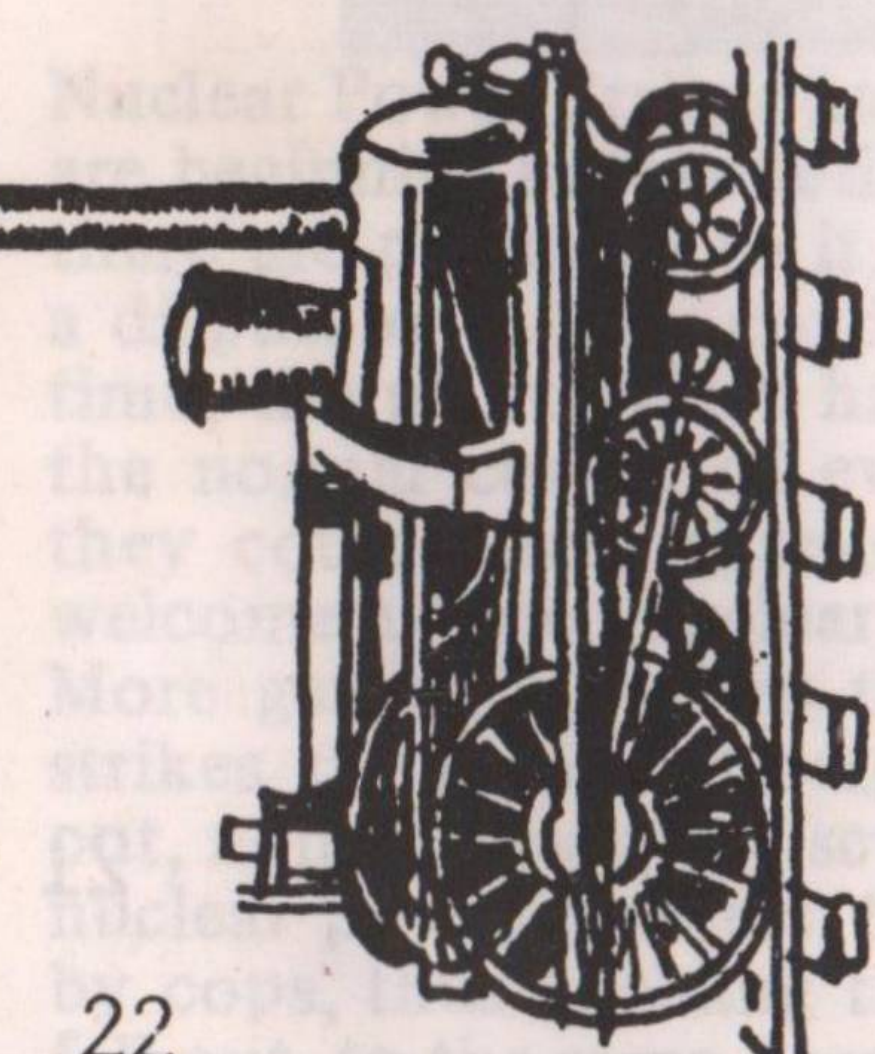
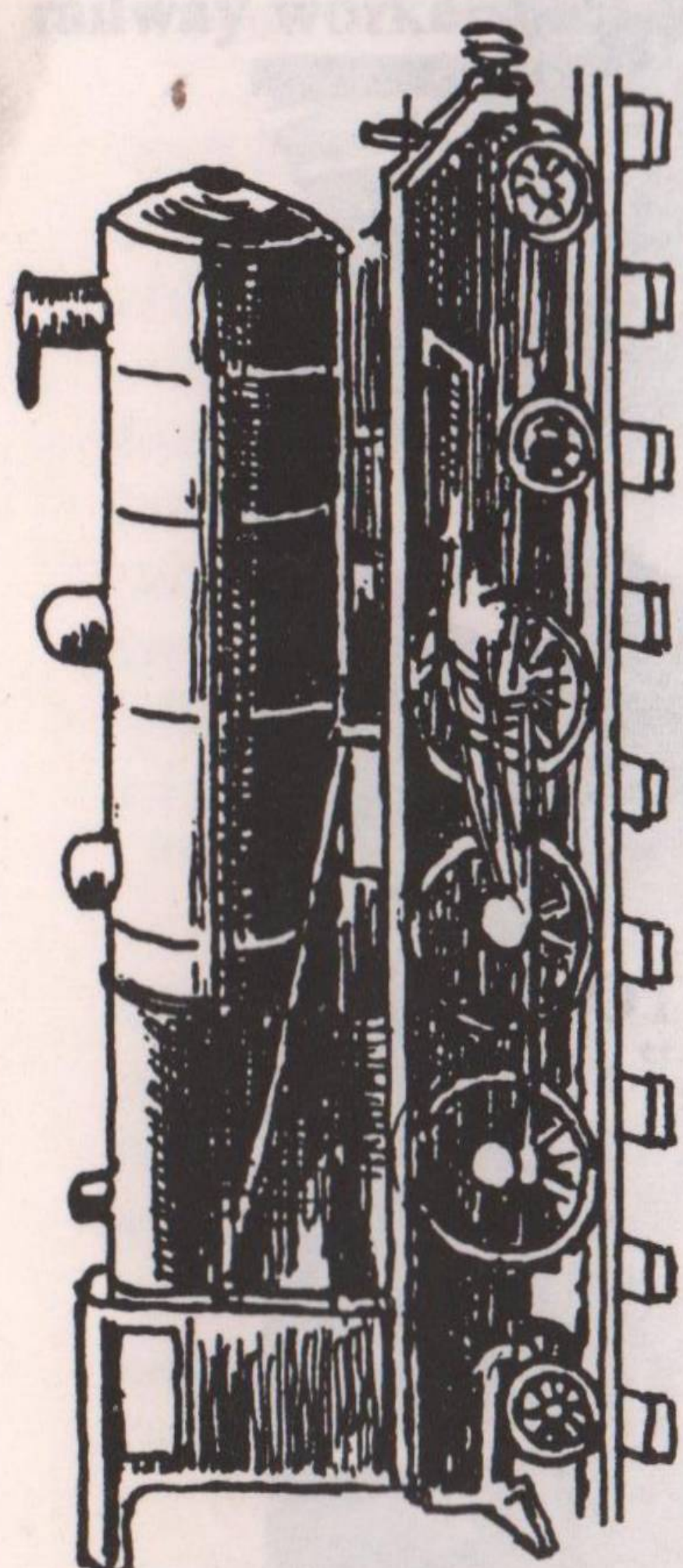
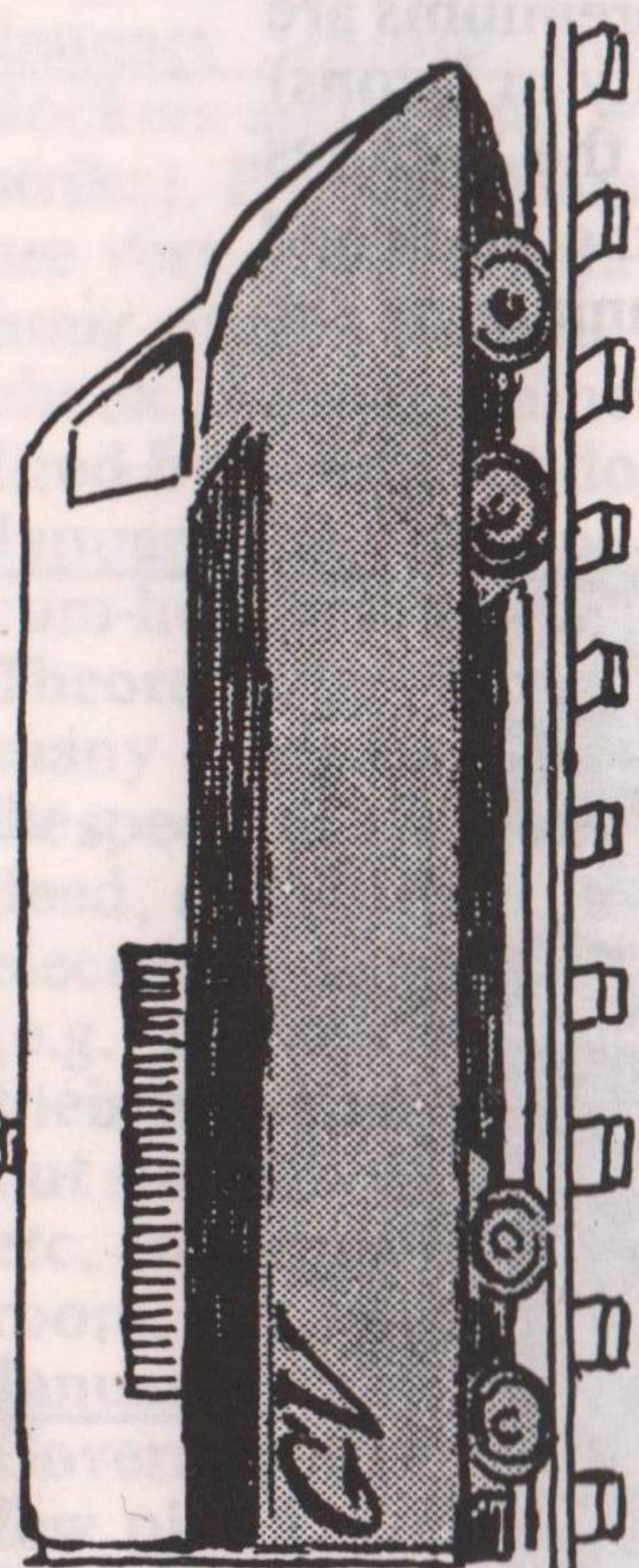
HISTORY OF THE RAILWAYS

1986

1980

1910

1850



Leaflet produced at the Gare du Lyon.

the striking railway workers
address themselves to the PASSENGERS.

For over a fortnight, the railway workers have been on strike in order to obtain the following demands:

- the definitive withdrawal of a gauge of salaries: "according to merit", i.e. only the bosses' pets will be promoted,
- the improvement of work conditions,- the suppression of repressive health checks,
- negotiation about serious proposals concerning salaries, and the recuperation of 1986's lost wages.

For over a fortnight, a large majority of railway workers have been involved in strike action. What this means for passengers is that the trains which are running do so under dangerous conditions:

- trains are at present driven by office managers or drivers [their stooges] without real knowledge of the lines on which they run.
- the maintenance of carriages and of the TGV (fast-moving) trains can no longer be guaranteed under conditions of sufficient safety.
- equally, the condition of the tracks no longer corresponds everywhere to the criteria demanded by the regulations.

PASSENGERS – YOU ARE TRAVELLING IN DANGEROUS CONDITIONS.

In these conditions, it's no longer possible for passengers to pay for a ticket, which is supposed to guarantee correct transport conditions.

There are no longer any ticket inspections on the trains.

It's no longer possible to buy a ticket without waiting for hours at a ticket office.

The strikers wish only for one thing - that passengers can travel in normal conditions.

The railway management, considering its stance, opts for the opposite.

It's them who take responsibility for the dispute.

**PASSENGERS,
DON'T PAY FOR THE TRAIN ANY MORE.**



Photo not in original leaflet

The CRS dislodging strikers who were blocking access to the ticket office at the Gare du Lyon.

AN APPEAL BY THE NATIONAL CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE TO ALL RAILWAY WORKERS

The Inter-categorical National Co-ordinating Committee of striking railway workers at a meeting held in Paris on December 29th '86 has verified that the national stoppage on the SNCF has intensified. Any information to the contrary is false. Sectors that hitherto weren't on strike have come out. Participation, even in sectors already on strike, has grown. The co-ordinating committee calls on all railway workers and all categories of railway workers to continue giving the strike their support and asks everyone who up till now has for one reason or another held off supporting the strike, to do so now.

The Inter-categorical National Co-ordinating Committee of railway workers is mindful this strike has as its aim a whole series of demands, some of which effect all categories of railway workers, whether they are train crews or station staff. These include working conditions, new norms and also wages. Our movement is intent on seeing that all our demands are satisfied.

We will stay out until our demands are met in full. This strike is down to the attacks by the SNCF on all railway workers. Payments for days lost through strike action, which many sectors have already proposed alongside their demands, is fully justified. This had already been conceded in 1968 after a strike lasting 3 weeks.

The National Co-ordinating Committee has been set up because this strike is now a strike of all railway workers embracing train crews or station staff. The action carried out by all railway workers has to be co-ordinated.

The Inter-categorical National Co-ordinating Committee rounds off the democratic form which the movement has invested itself with. The strikers' general assembly is a sovereign body which decides everything. The strike committee is elected from this assembly and is under its control. The Inter-categorical National Co-ordinating is not at odds with but completes the regional co-ordinating committees or the committees composed solely of train drivers.

The Inter-categorical National Co-ordinating Committee requests again that representatives elected by the base take part in the eventual negotiations between the boards and the unions. These negotiations must take place within full view of the strikers themselves. When their fate is being discussed, railway workers must be kept informed.

The National Co-ordinating Committee asks all sectors and all the different categories of railway workers on strike to establish the closest possible links between themselves. It is the only means of preventing manipulation and any attempts to divide our movement.

If the SNCF doesn't want to listen to reason, the railway workers will have to raise their voice once more. We, the railway workers, number 230,000. We must draw up plans for a national demonstration of all striking railway workers in Paris. The National Co-ordinating Committee is ready to organise it in conjunction with the general assemblies, the strike committees, the regional co-ordinating committees, the train drivers committees and the trade unions.

The Inter-categorical National Co-ordinating Committee has decided to hold a further meeting on January 2nd in Paris. It calls on all the sectors from the provinces and Paris to attend and calls on the general assemblies and strike committees to send their representatives.

Paris, December 29th, 1986.

NOT HAVING THE FRENCH ORIGINAL, THIS WAS TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN MAGAZINE 'OPERAI CONTRO'

Below is an extract from an interview with some striking French railway workers by railway workers from Milan, Italy, taken from Operai Contro, no.37, March '87.

Q: Do you think it might be possible and useful to maintain the co-ordinating structure after the struggle has ended?

A: It goes without saying it's not going to dissolve, it goes without saying it's there for good. The unions turned their backs on the strike, they made us submit and lose. Actually, however, we did not lose because we will continue to persevere with strike action and other forms of struggle. So the national co-ordination shall remain in existence and continue to do its job. To be sure, it was an expression of the strike and once over, it ceased to play that role. But the links remain and come the next strike it will go into gear once more. And it will be all that much easier now because there are names, addresses, telephone numbers without which one cannot organise a thing.

Q: Do you think you were influenced or urged on by the recent student struggles in France?

A: It wasn't the student movement that sparked off the strike but it must be said that it did encourage it in some sense and also because it met with the adherence of the most militant part of the working class. In particular, the railway workers - because it was they who took up the struggle with the students in opposing this government. All things considered, the student movement was important for us even if, to reiterate, it didn't cause the strike. It was of value because the students showed that relations of force are important: by getting rid of a minister, they achieved something. They demonstrated that by engaging in struggle all together problems go - and to obtain what one wants, it's necessary.

MORE THAN EVER

PASSENGERS IN SOLIDARITY WITH TRAIN DRIVERS

Whilst the train drivers enter the 4th week of their strike and the workers at the RATP, EDF-GDF and the PTT join the struggle in turn, the CRS and anti-riot military occupy the railway stations, the power stations and the bus depots, forcibly removing the pickets and even inspecting the passengers' tickets.

If there was a tendency to "flow back to work" as the campaign of disinformation pretends, we wouldn't be witnessing the military occupation of nearly all the railway stations.

We shouldn't confuse more trains running with more people returning to work. Indeed, if some trains start running again it's because the management is using incompetent staff.

A great number of passengers have been showing their solidarity with the railway workers struggle. They're sensitive to the form of this strike - which started from the rank and file, who have been able to keep it under their control.

The way the railway workers have taken their own affairs into their own hands by organising themselves at the base, in every SNCF outlet (depots, stations, workshops) represents an example for everybody.

The firmness, the toughness, the movements' way of organising, despite all the attempts at recuperation, encourage other workers to act in the same way. The threat of imposing "promotion through merit", i.e. the reward for arse-licking, on the railway workers, has been seen by other workers as a reflection of a practise which is spreading to all enterprises.

PASSENGERS WON'T BE THE AUXILIARIES OF THE CRS

In the face of the generalised disinformation aimed at isolating and discrediting this movement, all the better to bury it, in the face of Toubons' bullshitting - calling the militants and officials of his party to organise "spontaneous" demonstrations of outraged passengers, the co-ordination of passenger-train drivers committees calls on the population (workers, unemployed, students, high school pupils...) to demonstrate its active solidarity with the railway workers and to come and talk directly with them.

LONG LIVE THE WILDCAT STRIKE!

The rapid extension of the SNCF work stoppage was done without the unions. The General Staff, used to exhausting blokes by means of useless 24-hour strikes, have received a bad blow! In some depots the CGT stalinists were made to leave, but they generally cling on.

To the great terror of the appointed intermediaries, there's one idea being communicated: the idea of not wanting to be the bosses' and administrations' arse-lickers so as to be worthy of promotion and of one's wages. Everywhere it's the same rubbish who want to turn people into submissive dogs, to turn work into a privilege, to turn the YTSs into a favour and to turn misery into a fatality.

FED UP WITH BEING BOXED IN! IT'S IN THE DECEMBER AIR

The SNCF asserts that the strikers hold the passengers in contempt. However, it puts into circulation trains driven by managers who are hardly familiar with present-day safety regulations. As the striking train-drivers put it: "The SNCF doesn't respect the safety of travellers!"

At the Gare du Nord [equivalent of Victoria Station], the management, helped by a few auxiliary specialists, including an official who'd already retired, call on the passengers to break the strike. In sending the passengers off to negotiate on the platforms, the management hopes to make the pickets withdraw and to exacerbate the unhappiness of cretins.

Despite all the efforts of the management, of the media and other scum, the strike isn't even unpopular

What a merry Christmas! The big shops, the Parisian shopkeepers, the ski-holiday industry, the mail-order catalogue societies, the SNCF business... have troubled themselves for nothing

WHAT A SCANDAL!!! The Season of Good Will hasn't been respected.

The SNCF strikers are organising a beautiful fuck-up and we're not unhappy.

SOME PASSENGERS.

Paris 27/12/86

HELL'S TRAIN

"Nothing will be the same as before. Division and days with no tomorrow are at an end. What we say to other workers is this: take control yourselves. And, if you want to, make use of what we've done."

A railway worker, Le Matin 7th January 1987.

The storms of youth precede brilliant days, we announced on December 10th in relation to the high-school and university tempest: it's now that the search for direct democracy, and the rejection of politics, of parties and of unions, is extending itself onto an even more promising terrain.

In Italy and in Spain*, in Belgium as in Algeria, the 'academic question' plays the role of social detonator. In Alma-Ata, students become hooligans. And in China, inspired "by the coverage of the student movement in France on TV" (Liberation, 19th December 1986), no longer wanting "to be a slave people", students demanded freedom, marching to the cries of "Long Live the Paris Commune." In France, the spontaneous spreading of revolt has proven that the apparent stability is no more than an appearance of stability. Consequently anyone can take issue against it.

By generalising the wildcat strike and shattering the big trade union sleep of the last decades, the railway workers have shown that even in a heavily unionised sector like theirs', they recognised and sought to practise direct democracy. Furtherance of this practice is the really modern criteria against which one can measure all movements to come.

Through the sectional characteristics of their strike, the drivers had rejected external manipulation. Some of them said, "There won't be a strike committee or any local co-ordination. That would already be delegating power." But this attempt to go one better by abstaining obviously had to yield, faced with the requirements of the struggle.

Thus the railway workers have been obliged to federate their general assemblies into a regional co-ordinating body cheek by jowl with upholders of the trade union apparatus. What was only a demand advanced by the most radical people in May '68 became, at this moment, embodied in the facts right from the start. It's a matter now of linking these organisational forms to a total critique, which constituted the grandeur of that first wildcat General Strike in history.

The unions are hardly even kidding themselves when they slander the sovereign general assemblies, the autonomous co-ordination and the permanently revocable character of the delegates (Krasucki - General Secretary of the CGT - ventured to snort, "The base, what base? The base doesn't exist because the base is the CGT."); because through such organisational forms, the base rejects everything that makes up a union. The cringing curs of Force Ouvriere were not afraid to say on January 2nd that "some railway workers were acting on the fringes of the unions." However, it was they who, from the start, had been condemned to remain on the fringes of the movement. And since CGT pickets were not able to initially prevent the generalisation of the strike, the Stalinists are now attempting to suffocate the railway workers' autonomy through a pseudo-generalisation which they will be the sole beneficiaries of. Such practices show, yet again, that the sole strength of the unions is the weakness of the base and that to make use of the unions like a throwaway Kleenex tissue doesn't prevent them from wrecking, deforming, discrediting and burying the movement. The railway workers must now combat them openly, and without hesitation.

What happy outcome can the movement hope for?

- that the railway workers win all by themselves, shaping the form that the next social struggles will take ("Like thousands of other workers we are today confronted with the same problem. Management and the government are the cause of it.....We have to win this strike and we call on workers and users to show their solidarity. Our victory can only encourage them in turn." - Strike committee, Sotteville depot, December 23rd, 1986).

- that there is an immediate extension to the main sectors of the proletariat which could constitute the first moment of generalised self-management.

Wildcat strike, self-organisation, sabotage, occupations: by the exemplary character of the methods used, as much as by its spontaneity and its rejection of specialist politics, the railway workers strike has rediscovered, through its form, the radicality of the best moments in the past and inaugurated a new cycle of social struggles.

Whatever the outcome of the strike, the railway workers have shown the way. Now it is the abolition of class society that is the order of the day because it is necessary to reinvent this life, which is ever more unlivable, on a new passionate basis.

IMMEDIATE EXTENSION OF THE MOVEMENT TO COUNTERACT ANY CRUMBLING!
ALL POWER TO THE SOVEREIGN GENERAL ASSEMBLIES!

The December 5th Committee for the
generalisation of the movement.

Paris, 8th January 1987.

MERRY STRIKE & A HAPPY NEW YEAR

LONG LIVE THE RAILWAY WORKERS STRUGGLE

It's Christmas
Come on - no more bitching
Everything falls from the sky
Long live Christmas.
P.F. Lacenaire

Ugh! the bastards! So they don't respect anything! Not even Christmas when the shop-keepers make so much dosh and the priests perform such a pretty Mass....

Christmas! Spend without counting! Be rich once a year!
Christmas! Stuff yourself silly! Forget a year of MacDonalds', of canteen grub, of soggy potatoes.
Christmas! Give the kiddies some dumb present! Make them forget that you haven't seen them all year...or that you see them too much...when you'd rather sleep.

T.V. Christmas, compulsory parties, sinister family piss-ups! Christmas of phoney fun and phoney peace! Sparkling babycham and over-cooked turkey! Come on - give us a kiss!

And them - they dared - scandal! - to spoil the turkey, to annoy the shop-keepers! And to upset a government which has just shown itself so full of concern for the nice passengers...whom it will whip as soon as they get off the train and once again become wage-slaves...and privileged ones too!

And why this strike? Not even for money! Against...against the arbitrary actions of little bosses, servility, administrative profitability, division, competition...

In order to remind us of such a simple thing: the railway workers are men, not machines, not beasts of burden! Strike! Just to say NO! To open your mouth for once!

What a din! You can't deny it! The country paralysed! So much grumbling! Sure, if tomorrow the managers went on strike, or the little bosses or the M.P.s, there'd be no chance of anyone noticing...nor of anyone complaining! But the railway workers....

BECAUSE THEY'RE USEFUL THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

BECAUSE THEY SHUT THEIR TRAP...THROUGHOUT THE YEAR!

The State, the media, have sung their tune - you're clean, protected, privileged, they said - haven't you any shame?

And the old, the women in labour, the shop-keepers? Oh! have you no heart?

An old trick, which will soon be obsolete, since, if you listen to them, everyone's privileged in this beautiful country. Electricians, gasmen, postmen, teachers? You're a State employee, THEREFORE you're privileged! Dockers, printworkers, with what they earn? Privileged! Shipyard workers, and their benefits? Privileged! Prisoners, with their free board and lodging, immigrants who live in "OUR" country? Privileged!

And you who earn wages, or supplementary benefit, a pension or are on a YTS - privileged as well. Shut up and think of the poor.

But even these shameful poor also have their own privilege - which is to eat at Coluches*¹: let them get in line - and quiet, please! Let them not upset the digestion of those who are truly exploited by this system, whose fate reduces the 'true Frenchmen' to tears.

And who are these unfortunates?.....Of course! - they're our nice government and their friendly rivals in the Opposition - all the Oxbridge*² clique, this clique of bureaucrats, administrators and various elected people who have been nice enough to take charge of everything for us, with all the success we can see...

And the bosses - sorry - "job creators", who take such great pains to make us graft and to make their little profit...all those who have their little fiddles, the small-time speculators, the dealers who find it so hard to flog us their crap, and our nice advertising executives, hack journalists, professional artists who have the hard task of making us like this world, or, failing that, of persuading us that we can neither change it nor reform it.

Watch the telly, listen to his masters' voice:

"Dear Public, dear passenger, this is a strike by privileged people, these strikers are irresponsible, they want to prevent you from going to work, from going shopping at the department stores. These dirty scum are going to fuck up our beautiful economy, which we all so love.

And what about the inflation rate compared with Germany? And the Japanese? And the compensation grants? And the exchange rates, the productivity? Profitability? Efficiency? Promotion through merit? These shits don't give a toss!

Just as we're changing everything so that nothing changes...At least we have democracy - it's not a fascist or communist dictatorship...We don't starve to death here! Or hardly...Tell them along with us, dear customer, together, "Come on - get back to work, and quick, and make sure you work really hard and profitably, otherwise the door's wide open. There are thousands behind you who are waiting for just that!" Dear passengers, dear customers..."

Why are you laughing?

Fools! It's you who make us laugh! We don't give a toss about productivity either. We can see what scares you - we're going to do the same! Because we have the same problems with "profitability", servility, with arbitrary rule, with competition, with always being threatened with the sack, with our wage increases being blocked, with being also told, "Shut up and work. Or else...there are a thousand behind."

We know you!

Disgusting wages, disgusting living and working conditions...And the contempt, and shut your face and pay again and again...and you better be happy!

YOU'RE FUCKING US AROUND! - BUT NOT FOR LONG!

We can see that you're cornered, that if you give in now, you'll have to give in tomorrow somewhere else and that, if you don't, you take the risk of it spreading and getting out of hand.

We've seen how the railworkers have organised themselves, hoodwinking everyone - the State, parties, the media and the unions. They seek co-ordination without middlemen, direct contacts - all this is a good lesson which we won't forget and which we too feel like putting into practice...We've got the itch!

LONG LIVE THE RAILWORKERS STRUGGLE!

LONG LIVE THE WILDCAT STRIKE!

HERE'S TO THE CHRISTMASSES TO COME!

Pierre-Francois.

Paris, January 1st 1987.

TIME TO GET DRUNK?

The railway workers wildcat strike has come at a decisive and critical moment: on the one hand, the weariness of the passengers, on the other hand the anger of the strikers. Lost time and lost wages face one another. Nevertheless, the richness of the movement, emancipated from Union patronage, can no longer be sold off dirt cheap:

- The massive refusal of the compromise offered by the SNCF management is a refusal to surrender to a crude Public Order operation.

- The form taken by the struggle - a virtually total stoppage of the circulation of trains - goes beyond the initial framework of a simple walk-out, and puts into question the social structure (holiday journeys, transportation of wage-slaves).

- The subjective strength diffused by the determination of the strikers is spreading to the whole of society. For many people now, breaking out of despair means direct communication between everyone and the sovereignty of protestors against the strategies of political or union set-ups.

So the general social climate is changing: having ones' existence enslaved to the whim of a boss, to the arrogance of a cop or to the fluctuation of the interest rates, then appears as the sick humiliation of modern society. This disgust begins to recognise the power of its social insubordination. Faced with this emergence, which goes beyond the simple antagonism between railway workers and the SNCF management, the ferocity of the Old World is reorganising itself:

- The State, which is no fool, has, since January 2nd, put its cops on the tracks and in the stations, as if it were facing a new wave of terrorism.

- The CGT plays the pyromaniac by wanting to spread the struggle under its' sole control, in order to be recognised as a privileged fireman.

- The media: whether through dramatisation or banalisation, they were effective because they monopolised the publicity of the conflict which the strikers had unfortunately abandoned to them.

The practical actions of the railway workers remains less than the social scope of their movement: indeed, entrenched in their depots, dreading contact with the passengers, retreating into themselves, the strikers might lose the beautiful energy they had at the beginning: from the isolation in the drivers' cabin to the matter of the General Assembly, up to the inter-regional co-ordinations, this protest has been able to find the way towards a re-association of individuals breaking with their initial separation. Then, the dread of being dispossessed of their community of struggle provoked the fear of extending it; in the same way the practical opening of the general assemblies to other waged workers, unemployed, people in a precarious situation, seemed to involve risking losing the initial demands from sight, and smashing the strikers unanimity. In fact, the formalistic respect for the decisions of the General Assembly has paralysed the diversity of contacts and possible initiatives (flying pickets, blocking of road transport). On the other hand, it's when the movement enters a critical phase that this suppressed diversity returns - but in the form of sterile divisions.

A step forward has been made. The struggle now retains its legitimacy only in itself and not in the reasonable nature of its demands. The aim of the movement becomes the movement itself when everyone feels this priceless pleasure - to become the master of their own life. On the one hand, there's the certainty of having to deal with one's own narrow bare minimum necessities. On the other hand, the possibility of a community of struggle extending itself towards True Life.

This government, its acolytes in the Opposition, the French State, this miserable survival - all this deserves being shipwrecked!

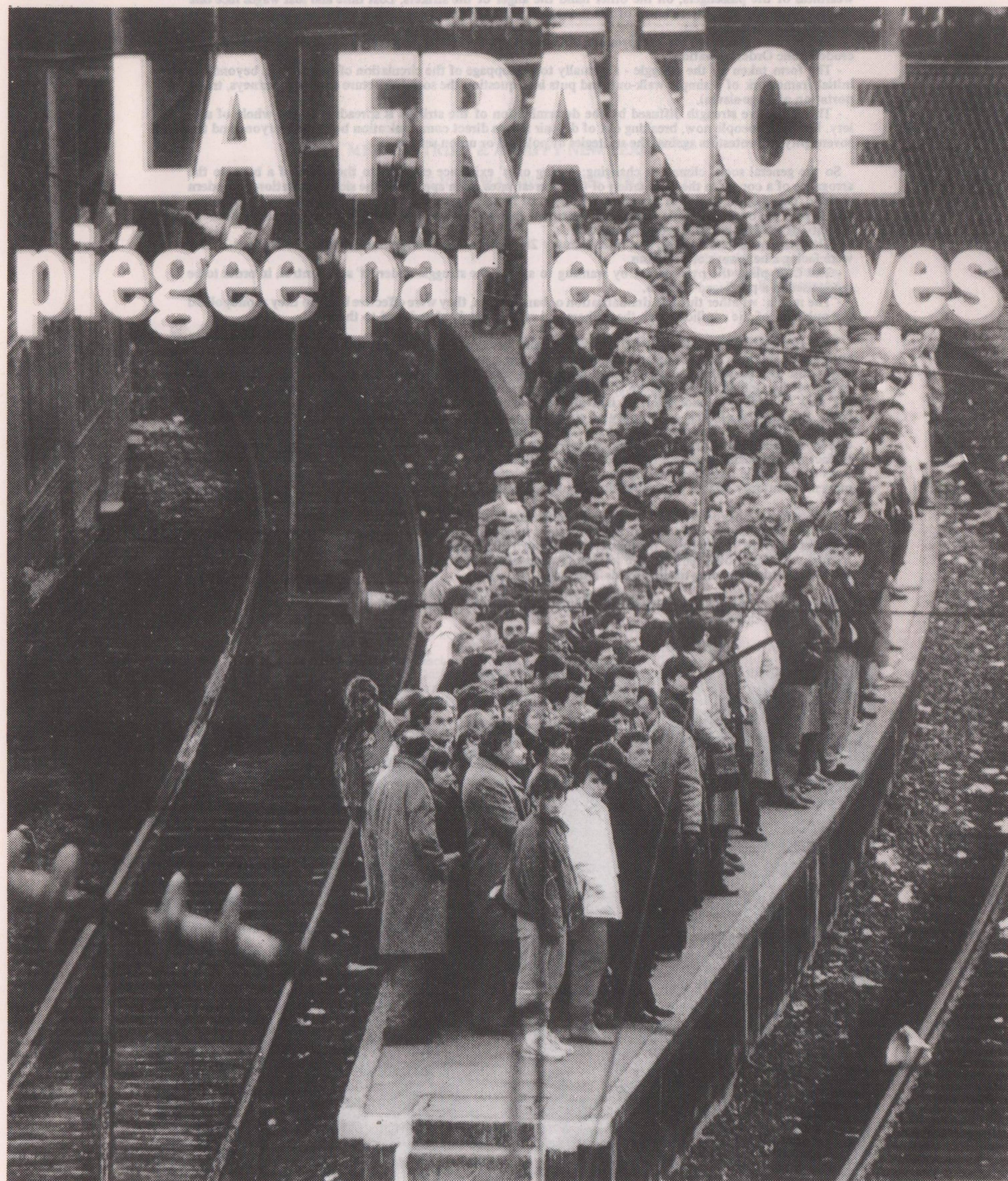
3/1/87

A SHIP WRECKER



The CRS clear the tracks of picketting railway workers at Nice.

This one failed to leg it in time.



FRANCE TRAPPED BY STRIKES.

TRAINS OF THOUGHT.....

When the French railway workers produced their leaflets, they had a directly functional purpose. They have the stamp of authenticity about them. Not only as regards their depth of experience as railway workers but also because they were not written with a view to impressing others or proving their revolutionism. The need to communicate the outlines of autonomous organisation, around which to organise struggle, came first and foremost, along with their specific demands. It would be easy to nit-pick in some kind of measly intellectual put-down, but for what purpose? For instance, one could say the leaflet put out by the users/railway workers committee from Paris and surrounding regions contains a hidden plea in favour of nationalisation, which lets the well-tried mistakes of the former erstwhile workers' movement in through the back door once more. However, the plea is ambiguous, and the other leaflets don't have any substantial leftist ring to them, or, if it's there, it's so subtle as to be almost unnoticeable (though it should be emphasised that the Vitry Co-ordination, which produced a couple of these tracts, was dominated by a Trotskyist leadership, though it's hard to know precisely how much they had to do with the production of it; in fact, in at least one station on strike, a Trotskyist steward clearly wanted to distance himself from one of the Vitry leaflets - 'Railway Workers Appeal To Other Workers'). Nevertheless, they are better than any such leaflets produced by striking workers in the U.K., who, nowadays, hardly ever think it worthwhile putting pen to paper. This wasn't the case in the period from the early 60s to 1974, when there were quite a number. However, despite some good one-off lines and graphic descriptions of lousy conditions etc., most of these leaflets never got beyond a leftist, social democratic framework. The people who wrote them were often independantly minded, suspicious of party manipulations, but nevertheless, hadn't moved clearly away from such perspectives, particularly in their trade union form. The only exceptions to this, as far as can be ascertained, were some very witty situationist-influenced leaflets written by some Tyneside engineering apprentices during some early-70s strikes, which, amongst attacks on the Union and the Labour Party, suggested how to get the sack in 10 minutes, 55 ways of winding up a foreman and how to make a bed and go to sleep on your lathe. They were effective alright, and caused the shipbuilders' union big-wig on the Tyne, Jimmy Murray, to froth at the mouth, condemning the apprentices' attitude and 'bad' language.

After that, despite the intense strikes, there's been a virtual silence from struggling workers in the U.K. on this written level, although giving old buck and outspokenness has continued unabated. But to put things down in an enduring form, one that people are going to possibly keep referring to and having a go at you over, well, that's quite a different matter. On this written level, there's been a general feeling of hesitation about taking steps into the unknown. And to add confusion to the confusion, the old leftist reformist perspectives have acquired new sensitised, issue-oriented masks (anti-sexism, gay liberation, anti-racism, etc.) and prove much harder and more intricate to clearly subvert than had at first been imagined when they were in their unadorned, overtly oppressive form. In response to this change where everything could remain the same (in order to get worse), with the left playing as much a part as the right, bewilderment and demoralisation have often set in for those workers who'd had some desultory, half-hearted, faith-healing belief in social democracy. Writing has become a lot more complicated. The attitude has been, "Better to leave it to a more sure-footed day. After all, writing about what's happened in the past seems to be at best simply damage limitation." Simpler, in fact, to just act on your feelings and to hell with the tags, guilts and labels. But at the same time there's that nagging feeling that won't go away - that need to clearly recognise the outlines of a bizarre web beginning to take shape. The "new movement" (if one can safely call it that), which more or less began with 'The Winter Of Discontent' onwards through the '81 riots and after, a movement neither left nor right, apolitical if not yet anti-political, has never produced from within, apart from a very occassional contribution, any throw-away leaflets in comparison with an earlier more social democratic form of struggle, when "unofficial committees" - in docks, print, buildings etc. - produced anti-bureaucrat rank 'n' file trade union papers which had reasonable circulation in the work-places. Now we're in an epoch where rank 'n' file trade unionism is largely impotent, even within its own limited terms (and, in fact, because of them). Once the movement had had its wings clipped by the TUC ensconced in the State apparatus between '74 and '79, this kind of rank 'n' file broadsheet (e.g. in the mines after the '84 strike or the building sites) has never again had the same impact or gelled with the real movement when it keeps bursting through. However, reflection and the practical consequence of this reflection has not ceased. It expresses itself in life, in attitudes, far more than on paper, than in the need to adequately grasp theoretically the change. Things happen in the U.K. within a limited class consciousness - it is only later, much later, that their deeper significance begins to be understood. The 'Winter of Discontent' was a watershed, because in the absence of the great batteries of unofficial committees (without which vanguardists of every variety believed no fight-back was possible) an elemental movement suddenly surged forth. And what happened on the social level happened on other more formal levels. In a sense, organisations were stripped of their meaning, and often their membership, overnight. And though people did not cease to revolt and to want a revolution, only the more pretentious described themselves as "revolutionaries". Much has been made of (to use the conventional banality) the increasing "depoliticisation" of the Thatcher years and the concomitant atomisation. In fact this dispersal is, even given the brutal tendencies of Thatcher's reign where any opposition (even partly archaic forms of opposition) have been publversised through mass sackings, jailings, etc., also symptomatic of the decay of leftist & "unofficial movement" illusions, both in the industrial & urban terrain. In their place, a more thorough-going, raging refusal, in fact, often breaks through the mask of pseudo-conformity, quiet desperation and schizoid resignation.

One can respond to all the reflections written down above pretty sharply. What the fuck do leaflets matter when in terms of sheer vandalism the U.K. has the most violent proletariat in Europe? After all, practically day by day, in small ways and often in big ways, they are trying to destroy this commodity nightmare and not philosophising about it in some kind of sub-literary way. But then you feel a limitation - a limitation which is very hard to pin-point. There's a moving practical consciousness alright - often brilliant - but which suddenly gets clogged up with a limited empirical outlook which just seems to intensify the increasing fragmentation. The very destructive real movement in the U.K. certainly overlaps, interplays and mutually influences each rebellious sector, but with confused distances and gaps in consciousness which more often than not veil the connections for those involved. It couldn't be more different in France where, although the real movement is weaker, once it breaks out, connections are often made, which nevertheless tend to minimise separations in a false feeling of unity. In France, a certain notion of theory often gives the illusion of a class conscious movement, whereas in this country, the absence of an ungoing self-reflective proletarian consciousness plays into the ruling illusions that make each battle seem wholly unconnected, and, in some way, purely nihilist.

Can written theory play a part in changing this? There's never been a sure answer to this. Unlike in France, there's a relative absence of theory in the U.K. which, to be sure, saves it from an ideologisation process which so plagues France, where the written word stirs up passions out of all proportion to the relation to practical reality. Radical theory here is generally not well-regarded wherever it comes from - leftists, unemployed, workers, paid intellectuals or what have you. Indeed to produce something (like this, for instance) is looked upon with a complex suspicion-cum-hesitant acceptance, both good and bad - and its ambivalence gets through to you alright. In immediate on the spot terms, it means that theory lies uneasy in the hand, embarrassed, you almost want to deny you've had any part in it! Better to shoot the breeze - it's a more enjoyable form of communication! It's an atmosphere which means that written theory is virtually ignored. In some ways this is no bad thing - when this climate prevents one from acquiring any potential status or role as revolutionary theorist (which happens only too easily in France). People who come on heavy with some pedagogical pedantic use of theory are generally regarded as arrogant pratts. Practically, it means you've little choice but to remain in a constant state of raw alienation, taking hooks to the jaw like everyone else. But then do you want total nothing/blanking/absence, having the ideas you have that don't relate directly to any immediate practical reality being met with indifference?

No such leaflets like the partly ideological, but interesting, French ones criticised & translated on pages 36-42 in this pamphlet could be done here. Or if they were, it would mean the whole place was in a real, almost no-turning-back uproar. After all, during the civil war of 1640-45, England was the first country of the revolutionary tract. So it would be a far less institutionalised thing than in France - it would really mean something. Significantly, some of these leaflets (again typical of France) received a fair amount of publicity from recuperative leftist outfits. What precious little radical theory that has come from the U.K. over the last few years has been virtually blanked all the way from leftist rags to the so-called 'quality' gutter press. And it's impossible to get any publisher to accept anything of value or get any ready dosh for subsidising it. No free 'publicity' from our enemies here! For instance, "Picket", the excellent fly-sheet which accompanied the Wapping, News International strike, (and which it certainly helped to prolong and to whose violence it almost certainly contributed), received no mention - or at best a line - in the leftist press, despite its weakness in avoiding criticising the trade unionist mentality and Trade Unions as such. No copping a plea here about lack of distorted publicity in lefty papers or complaining about the blinkered well-off but mean intelligentsia here who, unlike sections in France, can see no point in compromising their position with some radical status/image, by financing and copy-righting loss-making revolutionary analyses. In France, though the official publication of revolutionary critiques gives them a wider distribution it also turns them into ideology, their content belied by the fact that they've been turned into property, and thus can no longer be taken so seriously; in this way they become more palatable, less poisonous, for the intelligentsia which can now quote them to prove how chic they are. In comparison to France, recuperative dulling of the fangs (apart from, to some degree, in culture - music, some TV and academia) is underdeveloped here. In the end though, one has to say, with a measured but very sure certainty that radical theory does have an impact in the U.K. (and this could be true elsewhere, too) which is virtually impossible to fathom. Certainly examples from the past and from other countries (e.g. Kuron & Modzelewskis' "Open Letter To The Polish Communist Party", produced in '65, which had an effect on Poland in '68, or, better still, the Situationist Internationals' "The Poverty Of Student Life", scandalously produced in Strasbourg in '66, which had an effect on France in the run-up to '68) show that written theory does have a concrete historical influence. But can they serve as models for the future? Certainly not the avant-gardism in them - the idea of an already fully developed body of theory taking hold of the masses almost by conversion. Nevertheless, the risks these radicals took, and their timely written attacks, are exemplary, even if, nowadays, they are inadequate also: today, of course, the practical needs, the risks and the stakes, are far higher. This question requires something more complex than can be developed here in this text.

Generally speaking, rebellious proles in the U.K. don't read theory just like that and take in the nuances of the contents. To be sure, unlike some instances in France recently (calling some who handed out leaflets "provocateurs" etc.) and because of the changes which have taken place here throughout years, every now and again, of having a go, they're not going, despite the general scepticism towards the written word, to knock you for doing it. On the contrary, it's taken more or less gladly. But also, miners, pen-pushers, tough inner-city kids and others don't generally go through some text line by line looking for possible errors, ideological confusions or mistakes. As theory in short. If anything, first and foremost it's liking the commitment of having done it for them, the raj style/language etc. at the

same moment as there's a healthy mistrust of theory as being part of 'them' (i.e. something that comes from intellectuals, from specialists, from the division of labour), which you are sometimes mistakenly bunched in with, categorised as a 'writer' (of course, there are some people who claim to want a revolution who use writing as a fetishised mediation which dominates their social relationships, so in such cases people are perfectly correct in their suspicions).

On a more general level, there are, of course, many differences between the movement in the U.K. and that in France. One of the main reasons French railway workers could write and talk so well about what they were doing was because they were making a breakthrough the likes of which hasn't been seen in the U.K. Put simply - they no longer gave a fuck about the union and weren't worried about being frank about it. The ideology of trade unionism is much stronger in the U.K. than in France. Now only about 1 in 6 French workers are unionised, but in the U.K., it's still the overwhelming majority (although it's declining numerically) and, indeed, it tends to be the more rebellious proletarians who see Trade Unions as some support for their struggles - though this too is changing. But although there is an elemental movement in the U.K. - one that is almost without a name, and hardly even considers itself as a movement at all, but which appears in brilliant flashes like some Northern Aurora - it also, in off periods, falls uneasily back into the semblance of a tradition. Thus, in response to the stark facts that non-unionists in the French railway workers strike played a big part, the response of an independently-minded U.K. worker, glad to see it happening across the Channel, was glibly, "How can they strike if they're not in the union?" An opened mouth, jaw-dropping reply quickly changed the initial reflex comment into a ready acceptance that non-unionists were able to initiate strike action as much as those in a union. Nevertheless, this incident does point to a major obstacle in the U.K. now: how to clearly break from the trade union form of struggle and not just endlessly criticise it in fascinating detail, ringing the changes on changing the union! From changing the personnel at the top (election of leftist bureaucrats, etc.) to changing the rule book or the union structure to trying to make the officials be paid no more than the average wage of those they represent to more control by delegate conferences or particular mandated committees and so on and so on....In fact it's been the unions - and trade unionist ideology in the practice of the working class - that have kept Thatcher in power. For example, NUPE playing off COHSE and vice versa in the health workers' strike. Or ASLEF telling its members to cross NUR picket lines, and vice versa, in the '82 post-Falklands rail strikes. The miners strike is more complicated - but, without going deeper into details, it's clear that trade unionism was a vital limitation & weakness of that remarkable explosive struggle. Undoubtedly, in the heat of practice, the union baggage is often pushed aside and ignored, but only to be slipped in sideways when it seems pragmatic to do so. Thus, even in wildcat actions, the smokescreen of unionism ("This strike is official" when it very much isn't, etc.) keeps making an appearance and it squeezes perception of struggle (which matters, too) into an outmoded shell which stops others connecting and catching on. Oh for the day when employed proles in the U.K. will be as forthright as the French railway workers in the long and difficult task of emancipating themselves from the trade union form.

As regards perception of the French proletariat by independently-minded proletarians in the U.K., it is again quite complex. Conditions have changed quite dramatically over 20 years and the proletariat in the U.K. has taken a battering (economically, socially, etc.), which generally has just not happened in France. Rebels in Europe or America often look to here, with its anti-State eruptions, as an exemplary inspiration - but they tend to ignore the fact that the dispossessed here are increasingly at the end of their tether, and often find it almost unbearable having to drag themselves through the day. The U.K. has become increasingly a basket-case society. At the same time, proletarians here have slowly but surely become more and more internationally-minded in some kind of off-beat, patchy way, especially after the miners strike. There's developed vis-a-vis France a certain envy-cum-inferiority complex with an edge of aggrieved hostile jealousy towards the saner gallic emphasis on eating, drinking, sex, socialising, etc., though there's a contradictory wariness about some of the curious attitudinising endemic to a certain part of French life. On the other hand, the feeling amongst intelligent proletarians here - "When the French have a go, they really have a go!" - was still there during the events of this last winter - '86 - '87. But it's also no longer a tale of two cities. It's a response shorn of a reverential awe of revolutionary France in comparison with conservative England, which has persisted for two centuries among the dispossessed here (from the Yorkshire Ludds, through to many a worker who occupied a factory in the early 70s stimulated by some memory of France in '68). This always simplistic contrast has become part of a historical mythologising at odds with the real experience of proletarians in the U.K. forced to come face to face with their very own periodic waves of intense revolt and an overall incredibly fraught atmosphere which one feels (without making hasty predictions) is forever teetering on the brink. Therefore, the model of a revolutionary France has become emptier and there's no intention of artificially trying to recreate it in these pages. Nonetheless, to go back full circle, the leaflets of the French railway workers, postal workers (produced on the last page) are a good read.

Part of our initial excitement over the events of December in France were due not just to the fact that France had begun to wake up after years of agonising sleep but also to the plethora of pretty good leaflets circulating Paris during the student movement. Although we've always thought the Lascars leaflets were the greatest, we also liked many of the others, the ones translated following this article. This was partly due to our ignorance about the reality of what went on in December; there'd been - at long last - a riot in Paris, Chirac had been shit-scared, the railway workers had followed the students, and there were all these revolutionary leaflets, unlike in the U.K. In fact, these leaflets had played a part in our overestimation of the situation at the beginning of December - and in the confusion of several other people included (for example, La Estiba - journal of the Barcelona dockers, Counter-Information in Edinburgh, La Sociale in Quebec, and doubtless many others).

Undoubtedly these leaflets give some expression to both the breath of fresh hope that filled the December air & the way that this sudden hope can overwhelm the need to examine the complexities of the situation. The wave of enthusiasm, which broke the claustrophobic sense of utter defeat that had suffocated France up till December, was such a beautiful surprise that the inability to break free from a student reformist movement was hardly contested. These leaflets illustrate how insufficient it is to have a general social critique of the market economy, anger and a passionate will to contribute to developing a real movement of opposition. All of this can just lead to wishful-thinking, optimistically minimising the contradictions. When it came to the explicit theory of the time, only the Lascars really spoke for themselves, and against student aspirations. The rest adopted an excessively positive attitude towards the students, even though they were far more critical than the Leftist/anarchist stuff. Yet the leaflets translated here are slightly cardboard imitations/intimations of another '68 (but with a greater emphasis on ecology and racism) in a situation which was completely different. Almost invariably they combined a critique of certain symptoms of the politics of the student movement with a contradictory approval of the political pretext for the movement (i.e. maintaining the existing hierarchy of the University against its intensification) and the inevitable political/democratic ideology that went with it. There were political criticisms of the student Co-ordinating Committee, as if it were a bunch of bureaucrats acting against a radical rank and file. Others praised the "direct democracy" of the movement, its revocable delegates and so on, and maybe all this was true, as almost all students shared the same interest in peaceful democratic reform. But what the fuck do we care about it? One leaflet - 'Autumn Volcano' - claims to dismiss the universities, yet ends up with a pie-in-the-sky conclusion calling - when all is said and done amidst the flowery phrases - for some kind of intellectual elite of clued-in students; yet one knows all too well that generally when students read the works of past revolutionaries it's in order to get careers as lecturers, journalists etc.! Another - 'Quick!' (a slogan from May '68) - has some pertinent anti-political comments yet ends up with typical patronising ultra-leftist advice like "We would straightaway like to draw your attention to the fact that there are many other remaining laws to be got rid of and many other ministers to dismiss". For this reason, to the horror of its authors, this leaflet was quoted in a left-wing journal as one of the best leaflets of the period. Lamenting this fact, one of its authors felt he had to dismiss the leaflet, along with the rest of the situationist-influenced tracts, as merely playing the role of Jolly Joker, easily tolerated by the 'democratic movement'. Probably this is going over the top: it's clear that, though some of the more modern leftists might like to refer positively to them, there are also important aspects of these leaflets that make them a bit worrying for recuperators - leftists and other good students. Unlike the reformist chatter, these leaflets, however partly politically & ideologically, express, nevertheless, a real rage and will to live. So it would be just reactive and intellectual to dismiss them as merely "political", as limited, in a different way, as the leaflets themselves. Recuperable they may be - and for these reasons one must criticise them - but if recuperators feel the need to recuperate something, it's not simply because of the failures of their would-be enemies, but also because a threat has to have the sting taken out of it.

We reproduce them here* because we need to give an accurate critical account of the situation, including its partial distortion in the hands of revolutionaries; not to reveal these distortions and unravel the reasons for them would merely help their perpetuation in other ways. Besides, what's the point in criticising something which english-speaking people have no knowledge of? Coming from different angles of the situationist-influenced spectrum, these translations reflect ideologies far closer to a genuine antagonism to this society than Leftist ideologies: some have been produced by people we've felt quite close to at times, people who participated in some of the better moments of December. It's always more useful to criticise something which is partly, though insufficiently, uncomfortable for our enemies - particularly since those who want to end this society are generally more willing to reflect on their mistakes (in fact, in the aftermath of the euphoria, most of the authors of these leaflets have, been fairly critical of what they produced on the impulse of a heady occasion).

But the weakness of these leaflets were not just due to the unexpected nature of the events. In part, it was the desire of the authors to simplistically fuse their own revolutionary goals with the supposed

*Not all the situ-influenced tracts of December are translated here - just a few to give some idea of what people were saying and thinking at the time. Compared with '68 there were relatively far more situ-influenced tracts and far less leftist tracts in '86.

'unconscious' tendencies of a movement whose explicit consciousness was the enemy of these goals. They hoped to entice/convert students into a radical perspective when few students had any inclination to seriously act on such a perspective. Discarding the old Leninist coup d'etat perspective, they nevertheless hoped to achieve a coup of consciousness. Without risking making enemies of the vast majority of students who retained their student/careerist identity, such an abstract ideological application of 'theory' was bound to underestimate the gap, and did nothing to prepare rebels who joined the situation for the students' evasions and hesitations.

However, overestimating and underestimating students can be two sides of the same avant-gardist coin. Without subverting this need for an avant-gardist image, and the blinkered compulsion to have a "correct line" that wins you the most approval from your avant-garde scene, it would be very easy to simply criticise the Seductive Teacher form of this image, manifested by these tracts. But the flip-side of trying to draw such people unwittingly into a radical critique is to assert hierarchical ambitions on the part of students which not all of them have. This kind of other-directed notion of ones' superior radicality - particularly in its formally organised forms - can just as easily turn from being over-indulgent towards potential cadres to a superficial contempt towards these students, deterministically dismissing them as "future managers" (and this sometimes comes from people who, not so long ago, were living off a student grant themselves). To be sure, in the last decade or so of this century even "reformist" students simply wish to conserve their present and future roles - & for this conservatism, they are rightly despised, if not hated. But there's a not inconsiderable minority who go to college to get away from home or some rut or just because they don't know what else to do. And undoubtedly there are many students whose constant daily experience of proletarian life & poverty and the frustrated anger it inevitably produces mitigates against any chance of them even dreaming of making it in this shit world (but though they reject using the University to better themselves within this crap, these working class students tend to believe they can use an education to better themselves against it, a logic which tends towards a vanguardist use of intelligence, one-up on the rest of their class: they forget that all real education develops from their own mistakes & struggles, and those of their class. A few of these have some misconception that after having "proved" they can make it in the "education" world they will then be able to turn round and tell this world to stuff it from a position of strength - as if a confidence found from approval by specialists could then be turned against them. Behind this choice of 'education' as a way-out lies the need for an externally directed 'education'. So this need, regardless of any original scepticism about the university, can be easily channelled into an ambitious careerist mentality which tries to create meaning within this meaningless world, thus reinforcing it. Of course, for many of them, once they leave college, they're forced to realise how these hopes were just a false exit from the misery they wanted to escape from. As the Lascars leaflets recognised, a large number of students will end up as proletarians, probably working in offices - the "tidy factories". There's still a huge over-production of managerial roles - managerial in the broadest sense of the term - and many ex-students, who haven't it within them to be grovellers and arse-lickers, re-train as office skivvies (often badly paid skivvies, too), manual beef (building operatives, etc.) and/or (there's a lot of jumping about too) become part of the unemployed lifer/scrounger/casual worker/honourable thief syndrome ("honourable" in the sense of hitting the rich, the State, businesses, etc. - but not the poor). Moreover, unlike the period up to the mid-70s, many ex-students, because of the pressure of possible life-long unemployment, become workers simply for job security or a relatively good wage. And it's a better reason than previous ones. Gone is most of the ideological hogwash about joining the workers so as to radicalise them, foment strikes in the name of the revolutionary idea, etc.; all of which usually meant rapidly taking over some workerist bureaucratic position from which these creeps could again, bit by bit, advance themselves in the social hierarchy, moving, in one way or another, towards reasonably well-heeled sinecures as managers of discontent.

Nevertheless, unlike twenty years ago, the real critique of the university/college etc. tends to come from without. Primarily by rebels, employed or unemployed, who have either left college years ago or have never been. Most of these dismiss students as cowardly wankers, full of complaining spiel about their own narrow and relatively 'comfortable', misery; as poseurs, at best their rebellion merely verbal and risk-free; as insipid innocuous 'nice guys', treating life as a superficial joke; as arrogant and smugly passive cynics, etc. And most feel very far from students' self-satisfied feeling of belonging to a "community" which makes them feel, unlike the rest of the poor, somehow less isolated and desperate, saved from the raw anxieties of unmediated communication by their ready-made scene dominated by a common self-interest in conservative reforms. This judgement is obviously applicable to most students, but there are still a few, albeit very few, who have no ambitions in the system, who reject competitive individualism, who have no intention of being future authorities of various kinds and who go beyond good intentions and put their life where their mouth is. Even though the ever-tightening constraints of the economy have made the possibility of subversive anti-students seem irrelevant, even archaic, there are still some isolated rebels in the universities (like, for instance, the student who helped the Lascars apprentices). However, most students only see through their mis-education once they've left, once they've lost the carrot of a career and find themselves structurally within the proletariat, the former students who commit the one necessary suicide and slowly but surely have seen their educational interlude, whether in the realm of art, literature, science, sociology, psychology, teaching or whatever, as a complete and utter con (that is, when they're not bitter and fucked up about having had to take a lowlier job than they feel entitled to). Practically though, this realisation comes too late: they're mostly impotent to do anything about it in the sense of having immediate access to wrecking the generally useless junk in the library, disrupting lectures, deflowering the art treasures, desecrating the temples of ideology, etc. (all this hampered even more by the fact that goody-goody students - as happened recently at the LSE occupation - won't let possibly disruptive outsiders through their well guarded doors). There's so many individuals like this, but, by and large, they're isolated from one another in their private, but very right, conclusions.

Certainly it's still very necessary to attack the institutions of higher education. And no liberal mouthings from ultra-leftists or whatever, backing student demands, in no matter how critical a way, about the erosion of arts/philosophy/humanities courses and the seemingly ever-encroaching monetarist invasion of the hallowed portals, should deter one from forthrightly tearing these institutions apart on every level. An updated critique of the university would be useful (e.g. the massively growing role of art, initially fostered in colleges, over nearly all aspects of commodity reproduction over the last 18 years) to give this creative destruction a really keen cutting edge - not an analysis that's rustily brought out of a first-rate antique collection of revolutionary nostalgia from many moons ago.

Radical theory here has its own self-motion, travelling on something like a self-regenerative fuel. Sure, one can point to a certain theoretical excellence coming from France in comparison to, say, the U.K. But without carping on too much, one is left with the uneasy feeling - just what does it all mean? Does this ambience mean French workers are any different really from workers elsewhere? It seems, not a great deal. Therefore, how much does 'analysis' belong to a particular milieu - a milieu which is probably, on this level, larger in France than elsewhere. A bit of something to show to another in a charmed and, at times, vicious circle; a logo to keep a name in circulation. Don't produce and your discarded like an old bean can without even severance or redundancy pay! Produce something half-intelligent and they're not just going to criticise it, but they'll drag every word out of context and force you to eat them, one by one. Obviously this at times unfortunate posturing competitiveness has had no interest over the years for the French poor.

THE LEAFLETS OF DECEMBER '86

QUICK!

In four days the image of irredeemable wretchedness that dominated this shitty country came apart. It is clear the movement occurring today has left the partial demands of students and high school pupils behind. What it reveals is a more general dissatisfaction - one that has been reduced to silence over the years by increased police control and peoples' atomisation made worse by the day. At last anger found an occasion to vent itself, smashing apart the feeling of powerlessness. At best it constitutes a precedent: the State has received its first snub for a long time. Its security-conscious murderous nonsense is not limitless, nor can it expect to go unchallenged.

The young people - a million of them - assembled in Paris on Thursday, December 4th, were not concerned merely with getting rid of a government decree. What counted was finding they were together and breaking the boredom and isolation reigning in the barrack-like atmosphere of educational establishments. For sometime the media has portrayed youth as obedient and integrated. Some were to splendidly prove the contrary. This is particularly true of LEP, for whom the issue of selection is a dead duck. Their only future is unemployment, a YTS or the factory.

"We're no more dumb than you, we won't go to the factory." (Leaflet put out by Lascars LEP electronics apprentices, "WE CRITICISE".)

The apolitical character of this movement (which is not yet a critique of politics) has caught the State unawares. The bureaucrats are having difficulties channelling it. The reaction of the forces of law and order have been brutal and deadly. The success of these swine has gone to their heads - so much so that they have forgotten that people were alive. At Invalides on Thursday night, they got a rude awakening.

ISOLATED.....KILLED OFF (graffiti on the walls)

The assassination of Malik by the cops on Friday evening sprang from the same terror tactics as those of Loic Lefebvre, William Normand as well as others, assassinated by the police or nutters who shoot at every "suspicious-looking" shadow. At the same time as Malik was assassinated, a young Arab was shot by a cop at Aubervilliers. The media, on their own admission, sat on this murder story until Sunday so as not to inflame anger. The racist "beaufs" regularly kill people. Since the beginning of September, 16 people have died in criminal arson attacks on houses in the 20th arrondissement. Until now such murders have not met with any response - the opposite of England, where such attacks result in riots. On Saturday night that began to change. The demonstrators shouted "Pasqua** terrorist". A bloke had been done in, we went into the streets to protest - that needs no justification. And this is precisely what those who call us external elements (according to the discourse of the student Co-ordinating Committee) can't understand. Really it is they who are external to one simple idea: VENGEANCE.

On Saturday night it was not only high school pupils and students who were on the streets but youths from the estates and dormitory suburbs and, more generally, people like us who hate and want to make it clear we do. Cars were trashed, shops looted, the cops attacked (58 pigs were wounded, including 3 police inspectors). Taking into account all we've had to put up with, the response was minimal really. It was a breath of fresh air that we're not going to forget that easily.

Tonight has been marked by indecision, as on previous days. The wish to stay put in the streets has met with a divided response: to quit meant leaving the terrain open to the State, and if too many had remained passive it was not because they were just sightseers. But our latent power was not put to full use. All that braying by the student Safety Committee had been to some point. Above all, we had been confronted with the novelty of the situation. Immediate possibilities depend on how what we are saying amongst ourselves could best be organised.

For the time being, the student co-ordinating committee has been able to retain the over-all initiative. They decide, for instance, on the exhausting, drawn-out processions through the back streets of Paris. Seizing a place where we could discuss things would be far more effective. Moreover, shit journalists swarming around like flies are tolerated, though everyone must know their photographs land up on a coppers' desk. Quite simply, their presence impedes what we have to say.

All the representatives of the State today, from Edmond Maire to Pasqua, from Assouline to Mitterand, foresee the likelihood of a generalised social crisis and, as a result, are getting organised. It was only recently that these shithheads, feigning nostalgia, dared to speak about May '68, convinced the bad old days could never return. But barricades have reappeared in Paris and the anger could well spread. Also the old fears are resurfacing once again. The student Co-ordinating Committee is attempting to put the movement onto the plane of traditional trade unionism. To judge from their statements, the trade unions mean to forestall any practical acknowledgement by the workers. If they achieve their ends the State will be strengthened even more. Isolation might come back upon us very quickly. ISOLATED.....KILLED OFF. The movement has proven at least on thing: any law, no matter what, can be got rid of in four days.

The movement has not been organised politically and is all the better for that. The means have yet to be found which will confer free expression on it. As regards the future, this is what is immediately - very immediately - at stake. It is not too late.

SOME LIFE-LONG URBAN UNEMPLOYED OF EVERY SHAPE & SIZE

8/12/86

We are glad to learn that the proposed Devaquet law has been withdrawn. What we did was not in vain. We would straightaway like to draw your attention to the fact that there are many other remaining laws to be got rid of and many other ministers to dismiss.

*Beaufs: An insulting term used by the French against lower middle-class, pro-cop, usually racist, people who are always suspicious of anyone who doesn't seem to fit. There are millions of these shits and each year they kill several dozen 'misfits' with hardly anything being meted out to them in return. Since the riots of '81 (mainly in Lyons, but also in other big cities) these 'beaufs' - particularly shopkeepers and store detectives - have killed an increasing amount of young, and especially immigrant, thieves (with virtually no social security, thieving is even higher than here). Such unpunished killings, with a nod and a wink from both the left and right-wing State, had managed, up till December, to effectively intimidate those at the bottom of the pile into terrorised silence.

**Pasqua: the Minister of the Interior (Home Secretary), well-known for his links with the French equivalent of the mafia.



LATIN QUARTER, DEC.6th.

AUTUMN VOLCANO

The Devaquet law has been withdrawn.

Too late. Us *lucid rebels*, who won't obey any demonstration steward, have gone beyond the question of impossible university reforms. And we say: the high schools and the universities are no longer the terrain of life and knowledge but of factories for the manufacture of slaves and of the unemployed. This was already true in 1968 - so it's even more so today. Who still wants to "modernise" such a monstrosity?

Our uprising escapes all the "political" and "apolitical" schemes. It goes beyond national frontiers. It's the future of human life that's at stake.

In refusing all selection we also reject both *miserable technological competition* as well as the dole, the expulsions of immigrants, the eviction of tenants, the infamous saturation policing, the power of dole and of property.

It's against all this that we are rising up. We have no representatives, no celebrities. Each participates in their own way and everyone helps one another. And there are a lot of us, a hell of a lot who think that Paris is well worth the joyful fires of these beautiful autumn nights.

Our revolt has broken the official silence and raised a universal question posed in every language: *in what world do we want to live?*

A world where the forests and rivers are dying, where the earth is poisoned, where animals are massacred, or locked up, where people are brutalised by the media, herded into concrete, and enslaved to the infernal rhythm of a crazy productivity?

A world where one judges someone by their looks, by their I.D. cards and their money? A world where kids are thrown into prison for petty crimes whilst arms dealers insolently strut themselves about?

Certain bullshitters claim that today's youth don't have to rebel, that they have to integrate themselves? Integrate themselves into what? Into a ship which has been shipwrecked? Into the pollution business we call the economy? Into this house of fake cards, of phoney money and of unpaid debts which we call the financial system? Into this feeble movie where the *luxurious boredom* of a minority of nouveaux riches thrives on the *real oppression* of the majority of mankind - which we call "modern society"?

It's this which is in the balance - the domestication of human beings.

A powerful *revolution in the long-term* arises from the depths of the life and workings of all the revolts where men and women practise direct community.

We shall embrace every aspect of life and we'll re-learn from top to bottom the very essence of human activity on our planet. We'll stop exploiting nature so as to harmonise with it. We'll intelligently dismantle the technological mess accumulated by a superceded system. And with the material thus obtained, we'll make the deserts bloom again, we'll purify the earth, the air and the rivers. We'll take apart the useless polluting factories, we'll de-fuse the dangerous material. Since it's us that made them, we can un-make them.

Those who are at the centre of production - workers & technicians - can stop it and begin to dismantle it. Those who are in charge of "educating" youth can stop telling them bullshit. So, the young people who have the time to study, will be able to put an end to the "competitive" stupidity of faculties, read the great thinkers, prophets, visionaries and revolutionaries - and *create practical ideas for a new world* without the exploited, without the excluded.

As for those that defend the system, they'd do best to let it fall: it has no future!

Let's extend our gaze beyond France, the university, Devaquet, beyond all this little French vaudeville! The revolt against a heartless world will become a revolution carrying a *human rapport with nature* and *natural rapports between human beings*.

Paris, December 9th 1986
MARIE-JEANNE

DAZZLING DIZZINESS

The logic of the State turns upside down when it no longer manages to govern the judgement that people have about their own lives. The rules of Society's Big Game are endlessly aggravated: those who, yesterday, acted as separated competitive individuals, can now create the experience of their collective strength. The most unsettling thing for Power is not in its eventual retreat but in having provoked a movement of collective enthusiasm and direct communication in a country hit by an overdose of productivism and of security-conscious anti-terrorist paranoia.

SPRING IN AUTUMN

The future is no longer so sombre and insane: high-school students from Soweto, students from Seoul, youths from Constantine, French scholars - try to snatch, from the hands of Power, the control of their own destinies, dressing themselves up in the colours of revolt. Nevertheless, the fanatics of the Economy - who want to bend the living along the graphs of bankers' interest rates - have no strategy of domination other than to stir up the war of each against all. Obviously, the Economy, whether it be the West's, the East's or the South's, cannot allow human beings to live together - only to be mutually crushed. So *what's personal success worth in a world that's everywhere adrift?* For everyone, the psychosis of the search for money in order to survive means the exhaustion of human abilities.

The latest humiliation (the Devaquet law) reminds us strongly of other, old, humiliations: after the army (Hervé Savary agreement), industry (Chevenement project), it's the very soul of domination - money - which became the official power organising knowledge and culture according to the principle of economic profitability. The human activity of knowledge, vampirised by the Moloch-Capital, drops again like radioactive clouds, into a deathly power.

LET'S DIVERT THE SEINE!

When the Right wants to *compel* people to adhere to these degraded times, people generally forget the means used by the Left to *support* this same adhesion: it's thus necessary to learn the worth of words again in this world of lies; the "apoliticism" declared by the movement is a false answer to a real question; if it doesn't assert itself in an *anti-political* manner, in conjunction with its spontaneous insurgency outside of institutionalised frameworks, it risks succumbing to the democratic drug: their interests, which really are antagonistic to the State, will seem, through the art of political negotiation, as if they are apparently reconcilable. Let's hunt down the flatterers, the diplomats, the flies buzzing round the shit!

A protest against an inhuman logic is related to social dissatisfaction. Between those who refuse to pose the conflict in general terms so as to protect some limited control and those who want to connect it to political speculations, there is, nevertheless, every chance for the community of struggle to develop and extend itself starting from the need for True Life to not be exposed to the hostility of the ruling world any longer. Beneath the paving stones, there's no longer the beach but an ocean of commodities, where practical spirit no longer seems able to remedy life's fatal destiny.

This government, its opposition acolytes, the French State, this miserable survival - all this ought to be shipwrecked!

4/12/86

a ship-wrecker

CRUELITIES OF INNOCENCE

SPRING IN WINTER IN FRANCE AND IN EUROPE

The spectre of revolution has returned.

Although some of the stars of the '68 revolution have worked hard to relegate it to the museum and to proclaim the virtues of democracy and enterprise and in spite of the poetical enthusiasms of Seguela and the voluntarism of Tapie, capitalism is shaking, the politicians have become frantic and the police have reached for their guns.

Coming from much lower down the subversive movement is moving faster & could go further than in '68.

Power's fear is behind all the rigmarole about the dreadful 'looters'. But those who break windows & smash up cars recede into insignificance compared with the *real vandals* - e.g. Nestles, Sandoz, Union Carbide or Exxon (amongst others). *Everything is a matter of form*: the directors of multinationals in their mirrored halls who are responsible for thousands of deaths and waste running into millions earn infinitely more and risk infinitely less than those who torch some cars which pollute the atmosphere. We are overwhelmed with TV pictures of them doing this over and over again.

Liberation, the mouthpiece of turncoats, can only see in the present movement the desire "not to overthrow but to retain or reform". Retain what? This society in which *Liberation* has regularly been able to increase its print-run is also one that no longer expels immigrants but kills them *on the spot*.

Today the alternative is simple. Either student organisations and the unions will prove strong enough to hamstring the base which wants to extend the agitation (in other words, they'll be fulfilling their traditional roles - which is why the government tolerates them). They will only call a strike and a demonstration with self-imposed limits in order to be more favourably placed to dampen down the struggles' vitality - they mobilise people only to demobilise them. Maybe it'll be the unemployed - whether present or future - and the workers who'll find the forms of action and organisation to halt and bring down this society - so dear to dailies, from *Liberation* to *Figaro*, but so hard to live in on a daily basis.

Twenty years after, the old mole has surfaced once more. The fresh breeze of riot has begun to blow away the poisonous clouds of contemporary society.

"When pure water and pure air have become as utopian as a classless society, then, on the contrary, it's the classless society which risks becoming a reality."

CASUALLY EMPLOYED/UNEMPLOYED FOR THE EXTENSION OF THE STRIKE AND A GENERAL STOPPAGE

GLOSSARY*

POLITICS. A lie concerning relationships between human beings, according to the view that it's inevitable that the immense majority of people are told what to do by a minority of self-appointed specialists there by force of circumstance, race or learning. As soon as one condemns this lie, either in its totalitarian or democratic version, it has to be maintained by force.

APOLITICAL. Said of someone who pours scorn on a system which subjects them entirely and which they then give comfort to.

DEMOCRACY. A Greek joke to do with the power of the people in Athens where women, children & slaves had no right to speak. Opposed to this is "direct democracy" where decisions are taken by the people concerned and who choose, if necessary, revocable delegates whose mandate is binding.

PROVOCATION. From the Latin - provocatio : To call attention - a task too serious & necessary to be left to the cops.

MASSACRE. The calling to order of a certain number of people who take the democratic joke at face value. Origin: the Champ de Mars, July 17th, 1791. Followed by 1848, 1871, etc. Nowadays one would say: "Thuggy-Chirac - you're a real democrat!"

MINISTER. Employee. Paid out of taxes. He pretends he's giving orders to his employers but won't admit to other employees following his example.

REGRETABLE INCIDENT. Example: on September 9th 1982, 4 cops pursued a car catching up with it in the Rue Rossini in Paris. They fired at point blank range. The result: 3 wounded and 1 dead - Cecile Carre, aged 17. The Minister Of Police, Gaston Defferre, declared, "The car could have been occupied by terrorists." After that, regrettable incidents were de-nationalised.

DIGNITY. A quality recommended to poor people to console them in their poverty. Dignity is best conveyed by the poor when they keep their traps shut.

*A dictionary which explains the meaning of words that either old or not well-known.

NOW

"The storms of youth precede brilliant days."

Lautreamont

Here we have a movement which, starting from nothing, has scored a remarkable success:

- the two laws reflecting the policies of the government in power today have been withdrawn. These policies were intent on accentuating the economic burden borne by the population.

- it has caused resignations and covered ministers with ridicule and detestation and seriously worried government in its entirety. As a result its entire political programme has been deferred.

- Beyond doubt the most dazzling achievement of the movement lay in its own actions, which, insisting on direct democracy and the rejection of politics, exemplified the movement.

Power, at the end of a comical series of tactical blunders and police excesses, had recourse once more to a traditional duel contrivance: withdrawal firstly of the Devaquet and Monory law in order to appease their more easily satisfied opponents, and then, through a remarkably heavy-handed police provocation, to simultaneously discredit more radical anger and the worthy determination to make use of it together.

If this duel process, however obvious, is able to achieve its objective it is down to the weaknesses at the centre of the movement itself:

- for instance, directly democratic measures, like the holding of regular general assemblies and restrictions placed on the mandates of delegates, has not stopped the national co-ordinating body from opting to speak to the media rather than have a debate in the full light of day in front of those who mandated them. And it has also not stopped them, in spite of their professed anti-political faith, from allowing clearly defined organisations like U.N.E.F. - I.D. or S.O.S.-Racism from taking hold of the reins of the movement. And lastly, it has not stopped the national co-ordinating body from encouraging the enemies of politics from putting their names down on the electoral register. There has been rapidly added to the usual political reformism a new "apolitical" reformism. It should not be a question of ending a work dispute or of knowing how to settle a strike while the poverty which inflicts the young does not only inflict them in their role as pupils and students, but totally: one day, they shall be in poorly paid jobs or unemployed, consumers of trash or managers of nothing.

- The withdrawal of the contested laws will never suppress their basis: the commodity economy. The effective refusal of this economy summed up by some broken shop window can only be fully realised by taking control of production and social life in their entirety, to the benefit of everyone.

Whatever direction the movement now takes, the collective experience which has characterised it must be followed through. Many have now understood this. For a few days Paris had become Paris once more. Must all that be lost because the laws have been withdrawn? The movement still has the capacity to forge ahead: criticising its own limitations it is better placed to criticise a society which is seeking to stifle it.

Paris, December 10th 1986

December 5th Committee for the Generalisation of the Movement

TO THOSE WHO HAVE OPENED THEIR EYES AND SWITCHED OFF THE TELLY

IF THE COPS HAVE BRUTALLY CHARGED DEMONSTRATORS IT IS BECAUSE IT IS NO LONGER A MATTER OF IMPOSSIBLE SUCH & SUCH A LAW. THE TERRORISTS OF THE STATE TAKE FRIGHT WHEN THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE HAVE BEGUN TO SPEAK TO ONE ANOTHER IN THE STREET AND TO MEET ONE ANOTHER WITHOUT ALLOWING THEMSELVES TO BE INTIMIDATED BY THE FIRST ORDER TO DISPERSE. WE BECAME CONSCIOUS OF OUR POWER ONCE WE LEFT OUR GHETTOS BEHIND. WE ARE NO LONGER STUDENTS, UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE, YOUNG OR OLD BUT FREE INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE REDISCOVERED THE SPOKEN WORD.

THE STUDENTS HAVE CALLED FOR SOLIDARITY AND THE EXTENSION OF THE MOVEMENT. BUT FOR SOLIDARITY TO BECOME A REALITY THEY MUST INTERVENE IN EVERY CONCEIVABLE WAY.

ON FRIDAY NIGHT MALIK WAS ASSASSINATED. ON THE SAME EVENING ABDEL BENYAHIA HAD BEEN SHOT DOWN BY A COP (WHO, AS ALWAYS, HAS BEEN RELEASED AND IF THAT'S NOT PROVOCATIVE WHAT IS?).

OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS SOME TWENTY PEOPLE HAVE BEEN BURNED TO DEATH IN CRIMINAL ARSON ATTACKS IN THE 20th ARRONDISSEMENT (THE FINAL SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY DEPORTATION).

IMMIGRANTS ARE CRUSHED DAILY BY A GENERAL INDIFFERENCE.

THE SAME PASSIVITY HAS MEANT WE HAVE LET THOSE IRRESPONSIBLE PEOPLE WHOM WE CALL THE "ALL POWERFUL OF THIS WORLD" MESS UP THE PLANET (CHERNOBYL, BHOPAL, RHINE SAUCE A LA SANDOZ).

ENOUGH - NO MORE CLINKING OF GLASSES WITH THAT WORLD.

THE 11th HOUR HAS ARRIVED IN WHICH TO EXPRESS SOLIDARITY.

"TODAY'S THIRST" COMMITTEE.

PARIS, WEDNESDAY 10th DECEMBER '86.

this movement
(caricature and reality)

The State has launched its latest and only challenge: "negotiation or chaos". After having hoped to contain the protest movement within isolated faculties, the State looked for a way to close it up in the streets. The State has confronted the fight by deliberately using recollections of the past. In firstly intimidating (at Invalides), then in terrorising (the killing of Malik), then finally in extracting a political profit from the caricature of a riot on the night of 6th-7th*, in the Latin Quarter, the State tries to hide, by re-presenting what was done in another situation 18 years ago, the present-day increase in subordination by youth and the importance of the questions it poses to society. To regain its control of events, the State's strategy aims to dissolve the collective enthusiasm opposed to it. From the outside, it tries to impose its own rhythm and its terrain of confrontation. From within the movement, it prefers the negative game of divisiveness.

What's been achieved

The massive refusal of the Devaquet law demonstrated the return to the public eye, and outside of institutionalised officialdom, of the contradictions of a society martyred by the Economy. The restructuring which affects, one after another, most of the sectors of capitalist activity, attacks, in Education, a whole generation in one single blow. The selection/exclusion, which attacks the increasingly significant fringes of society, is the general question expressed by this movement. The student co-ordination has already lost their ownership of the struggle: very rapidly, the importance of high-school agitation - especially within professional instruction not directly effected by the Devaquet law - has practically gone beyond students' latent corporatism. Now students and high-school kids can no longer speak alone of the diffuse threat of social exclusion whilst others - the precarious declassé unemployed-for-lifers - effectively already live this reality. As for the political parties and unions which claim to be associated with or to understand this protest, the open defiance of the movement towards them knows very well that it's these people who are the executive-mercenaries who crush human beings in order to better serve the despotism of the Economy. The most positive result of the movement, for the moment, is in having provoked, by means of the confidence rediscovered through individual and collective initiatives, the withering-away of pathological despondency; what is at the heart of the movement - the freedom taken to discuss, the invigorating feeling of no longer being alone in the face of a hostile reality - all this must be defined as its concrete goal.

What could be achieved

What's been lost in the face of successive government gangs can be regained against them, who are united on management of Power. Thus, the atmosphere of hypocritical regret used by all the managers vis à vis the murder of Malik, can no longer make people forget how they normally "deal with" errors of judgement (!): we can no longer obey the laws and the men who guarantee the crime. The strategy which must develop a protest against the inhuman order of the world, is to remain, sticking to the truth, unable to be held down and uncontrolled: one can reverse perspective: instead of being undermined by its internal divisions, the movement can be enriched by its positive game. The diversity of initiatives goes towards by-passing the terrain of confrontation chosen by the State. If the movement continues to express its multiple waves, the State and the political rackets will become progressively powerless to stifle life's disobedience.

This government, its acolytes in the Opposition, the French State, this miserable survival - all this deserves being shipwrecked!

8/12/86

a shipwrecker

*In fact this was the first major riot in Paris since the steelworkers' demonstrations of '79 - and the fact that the State withdrew the Devaquet Bill almost immediately after this was seen everywhere as partly a response to this mini-riot. So the "political profit" it tried to extract wasn't particularly lucrative. (T.N.)

WARNING NOTICE TO ALL GOVERNMENTS

The week of the 4th to 11th December saw the first manifestations appear once again of what you dread in the world: social war.

You are sufficiently well-informed to know that coming through the student movement, casting aside its measly demands, are thousands of people - the unemployed, and wage earners, as well as students and high school pupils who have begun to think and act against all aspects of the society you defend.

You have used all possible means of forestalling the generalisation of the movement. You have gone from repression to concession by way of clumsy attempts at manipulation and always at the wrong moment. The bureaucratic ninnies have been more intelligent than you: in order to bury the movement, it is true that they had an ally of considerable weight - the lack of decision displayed by the majority. Where you inspired repugnance and hate which unifies, they knew how to divide. You owe them more than you can pay.

But - lo and behold - only a week later, when you'd just started breathing, everything has begun afresh: the rail network was totally paralysed by a strike which, beginning outside the unions, could well continue against them. And the railway workers, in their magnificent scorn for the yuppie consumer and their wretched holidays and ridiculous festivities, did not let themselves be intimidated by the braying media which had already treated them as wreckers and terrorists. The Paris urban transport system followed suit...in the ports sailors are on strike*. In all, it risks giving other people ideas.

The unions, pretending for the moment to be sympathetic to the forms of organisation the railway workers have set up (general assemblies, questioning the delegation of power, inter-depot co-ordination, etc.) are in reality profoundly disturbed by them. Sooner or later they shall have to try and assert themselves through separate negotiations supported, in case of failure, by police intervention. If that fails, which would, in fact, entail their practical rejection, there would no longer be any intermediaries between you and the strikers. Thus, in order to recreate the conditions of passivity, the temptation to put a sudden stop to this movement, which terrifies you, must be great.

Sensing the change of wind, you did not hesitate to carry out a preventive massacre in September, sacrificing Georges Besse* on the altar of social peace.

Any spectacular outrage which could occur over the next few days - a manoeuvre obviously aimed at putting an end to the revolt - would immediately point to the State as the author of this and all other incidents**.

Those they had wanted to paralyse by an imbecilic survival adorned with modern constraints, where baseness itself has really been earned, are today beginning to paralyse the functioning of this society. You are merely a sordid detail of this society which they could well end up dispensing with.

December 28th 1986 (to be continued).

*Besse: Managing director of Renault killed in the early autumn of '86 by the State-manipulated Action Directe. (T.N.)

**But even a right-wing State needn't be so unsubtle. The recent arrests of Action Directe, who must have been infiltrated by cops or cop informers for at least a year, has been conveniently timed to provide an excuse for saturation policing in Paris once again (if only during the trial), in a future which promises to be dangerous for the French ruling class. (T.N.)



THE LATIN QUARTER, DEC. 6th

FOR THE FUTURE.....?

AGAINST OBEDIENCE AND SERVILITY

In a leaflet handed out on January 19th '87, the committee for a sound preparation for strike action invited postal workers to free themselves from the official structure of information. As a result, gambling on the generalisation of the strike, we are making use of the opportunity provided by the dispatch of mail bags*.

If many of us regret not having seized the opportunity to have a ball which the railway strike offered, all of us, on the other hand, have noted how the bosses have soft-pedalled as regards work tempo and discipline. They have been advised not to add fuel to the fire. At this point, we realised how finely balanced the social equilibrium was, based on resignation and the idiotic notion of constant grovelling.

In this spring-like winter, which is typified by the return of the social question, it seems like a good moment to define the shameful crap which we have to put with each day, beginning with that which makes us swallow all this: hierarchy.

We have never chosen our bosses, however reasonable that might be in order to work and live. If the boss is a waged worker he is, above all else, a waged worker who has been promoted - that is, a slave who is that much more submissive and obedient. The main concern of a boss is to oppress inferiors and abuse himself before his superiors (and, for a miserable pittance and eventual promotion, he is driven half to death getting the unacceptable accepted; a useful means for both unions and management, faced with localised excesses, of submerging generalised dissatisfaction beneath a particular grievance).

That's why a boss is never a workmate but a cop someone we are accountable to for the slightest things whilst we have no recourse against them.

In this period of modernisation, it is certainly not coincidental that hierarchical power - the famous "merit wages system" - is at the centre of questions actually being raised (by railway workers, school teachers, etc.) because the only modernisation that is really evident is greater and greater control over our work and, more generally, over all social activity.

In the post office the arbitrary power of management stands as a permanent threat. It is the only power that can decide who is to be transferred and who is to get a bonus payment. How long are we going to put up with the childish fear of reports**. IN THE SAME WAY AS UNIONS GROW FAT ON OUR SHILLY-SHALLYING, THE ARROGANCE OF OUR BOSSES IS DIRECTLY PROPORTIONAL TO OUR PASSIVITY. Recourse to hierarchy and bosses going in search of promotion, pleas and other trade union sops - all this has to be criticised. On this basis, the end of obedience can be our doing.

The prospects of a social movement has henceforth led us to discuss the demands we must give first place to once the moment has arrived. The challenging of hierarchy will be one of the many questions we will be obliged to ask. As before, we now call on all of our comrades in the post office to refuse to sign their reports**, in a collective manner if possible; to neglect signing these police reports, which is what the PV*** are, or to make them ridiculous by signing them altogether. If these initiatives are only a start, they will already have contributed to demoralising middle-management.

WINTER IS OURS - LET'S PREPARE THE SPRING!

Bobigny-C.T.A. Paris 18-Pal.
Aubervilliers-Pal. Montparnasse-C.T.
4/2/87

Committee for a sound preparation for strike action.

Reproduction of this leaflet is highly recommended in all countries, including the USSR.

*Written by a postal worker (or postal workers), this leaflet was distributed to other posties via the post offices internal mailbag system, thereby not giving a grass or a manager any chance to do some fingering. (translators' note).

**Reports are written on each post office worker, much like school reports, with marks and comments.

***PV: Procès Verbal.