

INTELLECTUALS AGAINST THE LEFT: THE CASE OF FRANCE

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The French intellectual Left has undergone a startling conversion experience. Socialism, Marxism and virtually all other post-enlightenment visions of human liberation through political struggle remained prominent in French intellectual life until very recently, far longer, in fact, than in almost any other advanced capitalist society. Yet by the time of the 1989 *Bicentenaire* of the French Revolution, concepts like class conflict and revolution had completely vanished from Left political and intellectual discourses. In Perry Anderson's well-chosen words,

In the three decades or so after the Liberation, France came to enjoy a cosmopolitan paramouncy in the general Marxist universe that 'recalls in its own way something of the French ascendancy in the epoch of the Enlightenment. The fall of this dominance in the later seventies was thus no mere national matter. . . Its consequences have been drastic. Paris is today the capital of European intellectual reaction.'

This essay will explore the substance and sources of this conversion. In Part I we will review the actual story of the changing ideas of the French Left intelligentsia. In Part II we will try to connect these trajectories to underlying social and political trends. Here we will touch the heart of the story. Economic modernization brought substantial change to France's class structure, including, most importantly, a vast expansion in new middle strata. France's official Left, alas, proved quite incapable of adapting its own visions in ways which would have attracted critical Left-leaning intellectual segments of these strata. What happened was that the intelligentsia declared its theoretical independence from the official **Left**, with disastrous consequences for the Left itself.

I. Stories of French Left Intellectuals

There is a conventional way to talk about recent French Left intellectual thought. Put simply, Sartre failed to reconstruct French Marxism, Lévi-Strauss imposed structuralism, and Althusser failed to turn it in a Marxist direction. The field was thus left open for post-structuralism which gave way to neo-liberalism in the 1980s. We will review this story, but with an

unconventional twist. Rather than focussing exclusively on the 'greats' we will follow the trajectories of three specific types of intellectuals, the greats, to be sure, but **'artisanal'** political sociologists and generational cohorts of young Left intellectuals in addition. The reason for this is that we can find no good reason to believe, in contrast to most intellectual historians, that elite intellectual thought consistently overdetermines other, less exalted, types of intellectuality.

The High Years of Gaullism

The Vichy period had destroyed the credibility of Right-of-Centre elite intellectualization, so that after Liberation reformist and Left-leaning *socialisant* notions dominated. The coming of the Cold War after 1945 further narrowed things around Communist ideas. Despite the crudely instrumental nature of the **PCF's** 'intellectual' positions the party's political strength gave it considerable **power**.² This manichaeian Cold War situation came to an end in 1956. The **PCF's** unwillingness to undertake serious de-Stalinization and its support of the Soviet invasion of Hungary dramatically undercut its power to compel intellectually. In a new environment of peaceful coexistence and economic growth, official Communist thought appeared more and more inadequate to the task of accounting for a rapidly changing French society. Thus Marxism, which had briefly assumed immense importance in high Left intellectual life, came under siege.

Here our story really begins. None other than Sartre himself took up the task of revisionist reconstruction to defend Marxism. The very model of the modern intellectual titan, Sartre, manipulating a huge store of intellectual capital accumulated by the success of existentialism, remained an overpowering presence.³ But it was neither the militant existentialist nor the Cold War fellow traveller who stepped forward at this point.⁴ Instead Sartre offered the existential Marxism of *Search for a Method* and, above all, *Critique de la raison dialectique*.⁵

With Sartre thus in the lead, one major Left intellectual vector, stretching well into the **1960s**, was an attempt to revise reductionist, mechanical and politically determined Cold War Marxism towards greater causal complexity and epistemological openness. Important journals like *Arguments* and *Socialisme ou Barbarie* were founded by ex-Communists and other *marxisant* thinkers. Their animators – Morin, Lefort, **Lefebvre**, Castoriadis, etc. – shared Sartre's basic concerns, if not his existentialist predilections."

Despite Sartre's *pafronage* and involvement, however, the quest for such an open-ended Marxism fell short. **Michel** Foucault's 1966 comment that the '*Critique de la raison dialectique* is the **magnificent** and pathetic effort of a 19th century man to think through the 20th century' was indicative of how younger intellectuals received Sartre's magnum Marxist **opus**.⁷ Sartre's public prominence remained very significant, but more as celebrity and witness, ever eager to champion radical protests, than as a modernizer of **Marxism**.⁸

In similar vein, most 'lesser' post-1956 reformulators of Marxism, like the *Arguments* group, were quick to abandon the effort altogether.

As these attempts to reconstruct a new Marxism faded, a new 'great,' Claude Uvi-Strauss, armed with a new vision, structuralism, climbed to the top of the elite intellectual hill. Beginning the famous 'linguistic turn' by analogizing from linguistics into anthropology, Uvi-Strauss and his followers sought deep, transhistorical constants in human experience, buried structural 'languages' common to all social life. Structuralism, like Marxism, thus sought to decode social relationships and expose their basic logics. In contrast to Marxism, however, the logics uncovered by structuralism were so profound that they made history disappear altogether. Perhaps more important, proponents of structuralism were quick to denounce what they considered to be the anachronistic historicism in Marxism's focus on the connections between economic dynamics and social conflict. In its purest forms, in the master's own works, structuralism thus made Marxism look relative and ephemeral.⁹ The structuralist movement thus 'defeated' the old mechanical Marxism of the PCF. More important, it blocked the claims of post-1956 'Independent' Marxism, of **which Sartre's** existential Marxism was probably the most important variety, to institutionalize a more subtle Marxist-humanist vision of the world. Of particular interest was the appeal – which was intellectually odd, given its broadsides against historicism – of structuralism to young, 'thirdworldist' intellectual activists.

Marxism responded in the person of Louis Althusser, who adopted much of the conceptual vocabulary of structuralism and attempted to graft it onto the body of Marxism itself. While the patient was on the operating table, **Althusser** and his acolytes created a 'structuralist Marxism' which, while attacking both Marxist humanism and Stalinist economism, managed to devise a 'history without a subject,' in the words of Pierre **Grémion**.¹⁰ By burying social causality in deep structures like 'mode of production', the Althusserian **turn** undercut perhaps Marxism's greatest practical appeal, its purported capacity to lay bare the various motors of historical development and make them accessible to rational, progressive human action. The connection between the Althusserian reformulation of Marxism and real politics became ever more tenuous, leading eventually to a political and intellectual **impasse**.¹¹ Ultimately Althusserianism proved to be yet another Parisian fad which was well in retreat by the mid **1970s**.¹²

Here we will abandon the familiar. French thought about state-society relationships, as in other societies, was also **carried** on by academic 'artisans' working within their disciplines. French political sociology, the 'artisanal text' we have chosen to explore, is no exception. As things gathered momentum after the Algerian War, many plants, if not 100 flowers, bloomed. Thus in the **1960s**, there developed a number of **socialisant** sociological visions of state-society relations. Alain Touraine, but one example, worked towards a theoretical model in which class structuration and struggle were the key

elements for understanding political **behaviours** and state actions in quite a *marxisant* way, at least-in the **abstract**.¹³ Pierre Bourdieu deployed a similar conceptual vocabulary in his earlier works on reproduction through **education**.¹⁴ The important contributions of Serge Mallet, Pierre Belleville, Pierre Naville, **André Gorz**, Cornelius Castoriadis and others might be added.¹⁵

More generally, each sociological artisan developed different specific approaches and each developed-visions which were profoundly different from orthodox **Marxisms**, PCF or **other**.¹⁶ But the basic perception of a society unequally structured into conflicting classes determining political behaviours and state action persisted. Here what was interesting was the contrast between the flight of elite intellectuals into structuralism and artisanal persistence in the use of *marxisant* conceptual catalogues.

Looking at 'generations' of young **Left** intellectual activists – a particularly fruitful way of thinking about intellectual politics which French contemporary historians have developed in recent **years**¹⁷ – provides yet a different map of the evolution of the **Left** intelligentsia during the high Gaullist years. The deeply segmented Algerian War generation of young **Left** intellectuals was nonetheless unified around one thing, its attitude towards the official **Left**.¹⁸ Student and intellectual rejection of the war was much more strident and militant than this **Left** wanted to **see**.¹⁹ The PCF was eager to protect de Gaulle and prospects for a **post-war** alliance of the **Left** and thus desired a moderate **and circumspect** anti-war movement. Its scornful and **repressive** responses to the **budding** radicalism of student protest meant that **virtually** all segments of the student movement came to a committed rejection of the **PCF's** theories and **practices**.²⁰ The complicity of French Socialism with the war itself meant that students saw nothing meritorious in the SFIO either. The more *marxisant* segments of the generation thus sought different 'vanguards' from the PCF along with a different, more muscular, **Marxism**.²¹ Youth protest against the Algerian War was also an essential moment in the development of the **Left** Catholicism whose role would be so important in '60s and '70s **France**.²²

The Algerian War and May '68 generations were intimately connected. May '68 had its own complex causes and logics, of course. The protest movement, sparked in large part by the day-to-day ineptitude of university administrations, Gaullist ministerial staffs and the police, had quickly to improvise structures and organizations, practically out of nowhere. The politically-proven cadres of the Algerian War generation were available for such tasks. This juxtaposition explains the May movement's strange combination of extreme libertarianism, even anarchism, and Marxist **slo-**ganizing. 'Imagination' was brought briefly to power, amidst some chaos, to the words of the **Internationale**. But those who coached the crowds in the words of Citoyen Pottier's very French **poem**, even though they could not agree among themselves which International was being referred to, were

united about the one which was not. The Marxism of May, such as it was, was an anti-PCF **Marxism**.²³

Entre Deux Mais: 1968–1981

Pure structuralism, triumphant among the *grands intellos* in the 1960s, was itself superseded in the 1970s by what Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut have labelled La *Pensée 68*, post-structuralist '**anti-humanism**.'²⁴ Figures like Michel Foucault, Jacques **Lacan** and Jacques Demda became the post-1968 kings of the intellectual hill. All shared a profound rebelliousness, though each in his own differing way. More generally, all were united by a common rejection of enlightenment thought with its historicist postulation of ever-progressing rationality and understanding. Marxism was but one target here.

Foucault, a Nietzschean and perhaps the most important post-structuralist in explicitly political terms, explored the genealogies of various human meaning structures as almost serendipitous historical creations which blossomed into long-standing oppressive realities. History, for Foucault, produced underlying discourses which shaped and constrained social behaviour, **constituting** power in the process, but in a virtually random way. 'Man' was dead, or so at least was the Enlightenment's integral subject moving bravely forward progressive step by progressive step. Enlightenment humanism, including its Victorian subsidiary, Marxism, was deemed parochial. Oppressive power, to Foucault, would not be localized in institutions and institutional complexes, but instead resided in the discursive constructs within which such institutions and complexes operated. One did not look to *the* state to see power in action, but rather to a 'micropolitics' of discursive definitions and constraints. Moreover, one could never be sure of what one saw, given that actors themselves were placed in – even constituted by – webs of discourses.

Resistance to oppressive power was essential, Foucault implied (and himself practised in a number of different ways, including activism on prisoners' rights issues and the Indochinese boat **people**).²⁵ But the historically serendipitous genealogy of discursive structures and the relativized position of actors – the subject itself constantly changed in accordance with its positioning in different discursive constructs – meant that resisters would never be sure what the appropriate object was, what they should aim to change and whether any set of specific actions would change things for better or **worse**.²⁶

The Freudian revisionism of **Lacan** was analogous, dissolving Freud's concept of the subject and undercutting Freud's projected rationalist, if tragic, trajectory of psychodynamics, although here into a much more explicitly linguistic universe. Demda, the Heideggerian, rigorously denounced the metaphysical cores both of humanism (with Sartre the main target) and of structuralism itself, proposing instead a hard-nosed deconstructionist hermeneutics in which the 'subject' again disappeared.²⁷ One could make

analogous remarks about the nature of **Lacan's** and Demda's rebelliousness to those made earlier about Foucault.

Taken together, all three – and we might **include** a number of other thinkers (**Barthes**, Baudrillard, Lyotard, Guattari, plus the influential feminists **Kristéva**, **Cixous** and Irigaray) clearly struck responsive chords in post-1968 debates. In the experience of many of the post-1968 generation, rebellious acts derived from rationalistic, enlightenment-derived **schemas** for political action, including those of the traditional Left, proceeded from a statist logic which missed the point of real domination. Changing things at state level through legislation would have but limited, perhaps perverse, effects. All of this resonated with post-structuralist thought. Protest was necessary, given the oppressiveness of reality. Yet the diachronic setting of such protest would be impenetrable and its outcome unclear.

If May 1968 and its aftermath brought the ascension of post-structuralism and post-modernism in elite intellectual circles, they had different effects on the 'artisan' sociologists. For them, there was no dramatic **shift** analogous to that from structuralism to post-structuralism. To **Alain Touraine** and his *équipe*, for example, May 1968 'proved' that the conflict relationships characteristic of 'industrial societies' were beginning to give way in France to those of 'post-industrial' **societies**.²⁸ Production-based conflicts over an economic 'historicity' were being transcended by 'new social movements' and struggles over the 'programming' of society by new technocratic elites. Here the essential point was that the form of traditional *marxisant* arguments – arguing from class to politics – was maintained in order the better to argue against the usual *content* of such arguments, in particular against the more classical propositions of the official Left. The Bourdieu school likewise expanded its production on reproduction, with arguments which proceeded from class conflict to various types of behaviours, *via* use of **Bourdieu's** conceptual toolbox of cultural capital, habitat, 'field,' cultural investment, **etc.**²⁹ What happened in different realms of culture could only be understood in terms of the strategies of different classes either to maintain their superior positions or to challenge their relegation to **inferiority**.³⁰

There was also a great expansion in stratification-based *marxisant* contributions from other, less strictly academic, sources. Later **Eurocommunist** and Euroleft reflections (like those of Nicos Poulantzas and Christine **Buci-Glucksmann**) were significant, for **example**.³¹ Even *autogestionnaire* political sociology, whether associated with the **Parti Socialiste Unifié** (PSU) or the **Confédération Française Démocratique** du Travail (CFDT), tended to follow a neo-Marxist outline, rejecting, of course, statist correlations in the interests of decentralized class **actions**.³² And as the 1970s – and the renaissance of the French Left – progressed, the effects of 'official' Left **intellectualization** made important contributions. The elaborations of State Monopoly Capitalism theory by the **PCF's Section Economique** and the Socialist Party's discussions about le *Front de Classe*³³ were examples.

The political intellectuality of the 'generation' of May was another story. The renaissance of ultra-Leftism was but one of its manifestations. There was also a plethora of autonomous 'new social movements' – feminism, regionalism, ecology etc., not to speak of the social movement energies incorporated into the **PSU** and the Left Catholic trade unionism of the **CFDT**. A 'new culture' side of much of the May generation, whatever specific trajectory one discusses – excepting, perhaps, the ultra-Leftists, is also worthy of mention. The conviction that social life, including sexual life, ought to be more relaxed, or at least different from what it had been before, was shared across political **divides**.³⁴

The **1970s** biographies of other segments of the '68 generation are different still. *Pace* Alain Touraine, French post-1960s 'new social movements,' including, most importantly, French feminism, upon whose trajectory we will briefly focus, never achieved the prominence of those in other advanced societies. At the precise moment when these movements arose, the official French Left, which had been out of power for decades, itself began to gather the steam which eventually brought it to power in 1981. Both the Socialists and the Communists, the major components of the official Left, were eager to coopt the energies of various post-1968 rebellious currents, including feminism. Moreover, both had a history of what one might call 'socialist feminism,' of raising women's issues in the context of a broader 'class' appeal. The new women's movement in France – along with virtually all of the other 1970s 'new social movements' – had therefore to choose between independence and integration into the official Left, which promised a certain amount of **political** effectiveness at the price of accepting 'socialist feminism.' The consequence of this situation divided and severely weakened the autonomous women's movement in France. Different fractions of the movement made different choices, but the 'vacuum cleaner' effect of the official Left parties was considerable. Those segments of the movement which remained outside the orbit of the official Left (and the unions, also important players) themselves rapidly divided into small competing **groups** whose internecine conflicts further undercut the movement's **position**.³⁵

The *gauchiste* sequels of May 68 were different – here **we will** follow the trajectories of the Maoists. The passionate *encadrement* of Maoists and others like them in quasi-cult grouplets could not be sustained in an ever more indifferent environment. The feelings of self-deception and personal waste which followed contributed to the creation of an important community of apostates. The so-called 'new philosophy' was one manifestation of this **apostasy**.³⁶ From naive beliefs in miracle solutions to France's problems – whether proletarian revolution or *autogestion* – there first emerged anger that the world was refractory to such visions and then fury at the 'straight' Left which, in the **1970s**, was capitalizing on French discontents using traditional political programmes and methods. A strange, extremely belated, discovery by the French intelligentsia of the unpleasantness of Soviet society and a

consequent wave of anti-Sovietism played an important role. By the **mid-1970s**, the underlying direction which had emerged was that the politics of the 'old' Left, embodied in Unwn de la *Gauche*, were both out of date and dangerous.

The separation of important segments of the maturing *soixante* huitard generation from official Left politics was thus **reconfirmed** even as the justifications for this separation changed dramatically. The new perspectives involved complete rejection of global social thinking plus strong anti-statism, given the ties to post-structuralist thought and anarchism. Conviction grew that decentralized and democratic, often non-political, movements below central state level were the real bearers of progressive change in France – in the jargon which was to come, 'civil society' was the locus of social creativity, not parties and civil servants. Here, the ex-gauchistes rejoined other, more autogestionnaire, segments of the 1968 generation.

In retrospect, the coming of Unwn de la Gauche in the 1970s was of great importance for the 1968 generation. Not all of that generation gravitated towards a radical scepticism of official Left ideas. A large group of *soixante* huitard! did find their way towards the two major parties of the Left. By the early **1970s**, the renewed Socialist Party offered young intellectual *militants* new openings to do Left politics within a rapidly changing political organization which might, in the medium term, confer large career rewards. Large numbers of the 68 and Left Unity generations also joined the PCF, motivated by a desire to combine militancy, passion and career similar to that of their PS *frères-ennemis*.³⁷

The most important characteristic of this incorporation of intellectuals into the official Left was its partiality. Those who entered the PCF were rudely removed at the end of the 1970s when the party's strategy changed. For their part, those who joined the PS bought into it a profound contradiction between the party's coalition setting and the social alliance needs to which it had to respond. Opting for Union de la Gauche involved 'dealing' with the **PCF** in order better to subordinate and weaken French Communism. We now know how successful this choice turned out to be electorally. But Union de la Gauche meant compromising with the PCF on programme and **ideology**.³⁸ This meant a general PS outlook in the 1970s governed by the spirit of the 1972 Common Programme, a statist, dirigiste platform of reforms which many intellectuals rejected.

The Success of Anti-Marxist Intellectuality: The 1980s

Fate marked the first years of the 1980s. In close proximity, a number of once and would-be kings of intellectual Parisiaaaa died – Barthes, Sartre, Aron, **Lacan**, Foucault. Certain others (Althusser, after the murder of his wife, even **Derrida**, despite his continuing American celebrity) fell into lengthening shadows. The death of Vincennes University, the symbol of post-1968 thought, was equally **ominous**.³⁹ Starting at the same point, post-structuralism

began to decline – even though its success as an export product to the English-speaking world kept such news from crossing the Channel and the Atlantic – wounded by ever more intense critical attack and changing political concerns. Socially, the post-68 moment of rebellion had ended. Economically, the post-war boom had collapsed into hard-nosed discussions of policy reevaluation. 'Boat people' washing ashore, the sequels of the Chinese cultural revolution, martial law and the repression of Solidarnosc in Poland, and the Afghan invasion, among other things, provided additional reasons to reflect on the various radical **utopianisms** of the 1960s. The rapid policy failure of the French **Left** after it came to power in 1981 furthered contributed to a newly sober environment.

By the **turn** of the **1980s**, characteristic outlooks among elite **Left** intellectuals had changed dramatically. Something which we might label 'neo-liberalism with a human face' progressively took stage centre away from **post-structuralism**. Growing anti-statism fed a resurrection of liberal political philosophizing. There were, to be sure, distant lines of kinship between post-structuralism and an emergent decentralized individualism. Post-structuralism had made it unsound to **reify** the state as the key locus of oppression and the central fulcrum for progressive change. Still, **post-structuralism** had been intent both on **identifying** the roots of oppression elsewhere and in advocating resistance. And here the break occurred. The new liberalism, if also belligerently anti-statist, was infinitely less concerned with localizing sources of oppression and, more important, was anything but rebellious.

A number of different intellectual quests converged on the final results. The Marxist operation of reducing the separate **dynamics** of state and society to one set of causal variables and programming their reconciliation in a utopian, non-contradictory future had been disposed of earlier. To budding new liberals, the use of state power to reduce social oppression created new problems without alleviating those which statist strategies set out to resolve in the first place. In the new setting, elite intellectuals also found it less and less compelling to use deconstructive techniques to cast doubt on the very possibility of finding meaning in the social and political world. Thus it could no longer be a question of positing the constantly shifting, unpredictable but nonetheless omniscient oppressiveness of both state and society. The contradictions between these two things seemed, instead, to be permanent, and this was what was most important to confront. The conclusion was that one had to philosophize anew about relationships between state and society.

The underlying search, by the **mid-1980s**, was for the theoretical groundings of a polity where state power would be **limited** and circumscribed, allowing maximum space for democratic individualism while avoiding the undesirable atomizing aspects of Anglo-Saxon utilitarianism. It was a case of looking for America without Reagan and Adam Smith. To find it, there was first of all an Aron renaissance, which grew even more important following the great

liberal's death. Aron once monumentalized, there then followed a massive reexamination of 19th century French liberalism – Constant, Guizot and, above all, **Tocqueville**.⁴⁰ Simultaneously there was busy translation from the English and American – of Karl Popper, Friedrich von Hayek and Hannah **Arendt**,⁴¹ along with 1950s and 1960s reflections on pluralism and more recent liberal reflections on distributive justice, Rawls in particular.

There was striking new modesty in all this. Elite French Left intellectuals lost their traditional taste for global reflection on the nature of society per se. Instead, they turned to a preoccupation with what they perceived to be the eternal problems of all societies which, by definition, were unresolvable. The new issue was to find humane ways of living with their permanence. In consequence, generalizing conceptualizations which placed their makers in positions of critical externality to what existed – 'ideologies,' if you will – came to be regarded as intrinsically dangerous. What existed was fundamentally ineluctable, rendering effort to transcend it futile and hubristic. As two insightful critics noted, because politics could no longer change anything profound, political issues became technical '...it was up to politics to ensure the indispensable minimum of collective relationships, but real life lay somewhere else.'⁴²

The situation of Left intellectual artisans also changed dramatically. First of all, there was a rapid deflation of artisanal confidence in neo-Marxist stratification-based models of politics, such that by the mid-1980s Marxist concepts had disappeared from the wordprocessors and bookshelves of French social **scientists**.⁴³ In more influential recent works, issues pertaining to social stratification and politics – Luc Boltanski's *Cadres*, for example – one finds a newly **phenomenologized** sense of the social construction of groups rather than reference to underlying social **structures**.⁴⁴ The centrality of politics itself declined. Alain Touraine, always a bellwether, wrote in 1987 that '...Politics seemed. . . [as late as] . . . 1981, to be at the center and summit of social life. Now it is only a passage way between the problems of personal life and those of the international economic and military system. . .'⁴⁵

If **Left** political sociology ceased being 'Left' in the older French sense of the term, no single coherent alternative replaced the 'old' class analytical orthodoxy. Nonetheless, here too there was also new reflection about 19th century French liberal republican political culture and its social bases, paralleling the rise of similar concerns in elite social theory. Tocqueville, retranslated from the American, often replaced **Marx**.⁴⁶ Quite as important, the increasing intellectual prominence of economists and economism erected a new language of constraint and refractory **environments**.⁴⁷ Underlying this, confidence in the state's capacity to reorient social behaviours, to coordinate the economy in equitable ways, to regenerate civic virtue, etc. disappeared. Much theoretical and methodological attention turned towards individuals and their calculations⁴⁸ – aided and abetted by evidence from opinion polls and election studies which showed a rise in individual, as opposed

to class, orientations – and to the textures of non-political associative life.⁴⁹

Throughout the **1960s** and **1970s** one got a different picture of intellectual movements and the forces behind them when one chose the prism of political generations of intellectuals rather than **those** of the *grands intellos* and 'artisans.' By the **1980s** this was much less true. The trajectories of many post-1968 *gauchistes* towards liberalism was already quite clear prior to the **1980s**, as was the virtual disappearance of 'new social movement' activists due to the vacuum cleaner effects of the Left in the 1970s. On the level of Left intellectual generations, by the earlier **1980s** a 'certain Leftism,' *marxirant* or *socialisant*, statist and voluntarist about the uses of political power to change economy and society in a radical way, had disappeared. It **was** replaced in differing ways, of course, but there were common themes placing much greater weight on the importance of creativity and innovation in the social sphere together with much greater scepticism about the capacities of the state to promote social change. And, almost **as** significantly, the 'market' was rediscovered as a part of this creative social world rather than an appendage of **politics** to be manipulated by the state.

II Deconstructing French Intellectuals

Telling the story of French intellectuals in a more complicated way than it is usually told – by refusing to focus exclusively on the so-called 'greats' – does not make it any more uplifting from a Left point of view. More important, we have not yet uncovered the real plot. Intellectuals are creators, undeniably. Yet, to paraphrase an author no longer read in France, they create in social contexts not of their own choosing. We must therefore explore the contexts within which French intellectuals have worked in the past three decades. What have been the social *causes* of the cataclysm of Left thought in France?

The Limits of Sociology

We must first look at the data. The social settings of French intellectual life were well under reconstruction by the 1960s. A massive post-war demographic upturn had begun to affect French institutions, coinciding with the very high growth rates, changing lifestyles and shifting occupational patterns of the onrushing post-war boom. Employment in tertiary areas, those demanding higher educational attainment in particular, increased very rapidly: managers, bureaucrats and professionals practically doubled from 7.7% of the labour force in 1954 to 14.8% in 1968, while white collar workers grew from 10.8 to **14.8%**.⁵⁰ Political changes, the coming of the Gaullist Fifth Republic after 1958 in particular, also played their role. The political aftermath of the Algerian War thus coincided with a dramatic increase in new middle strata occupations, in the numbers of young French people seeking higher educational credentials, and in the population being schooled more generally.⁵¹

Modernizing capitalist societies needed more educated people, more 'intellectual' workers in teaching, research and development and the production of new cultural objects (books, magazines, films, television programmes, advertising), more trained managers and bureaucrats, more social service workers. France, moreover, needed these new people rather rapidly, given the unusual speed of its modernization. And in France, they burst upon a society which still cherished pre-war cultural outlooks. Thus in the 1960s, French intellectual institutions, particularly those in education and research, expanded amidst chaotically changing rules, unpredictable expectations and careers, changing professional structures and shifts in the organization of knowledge itself. And while these things occurred, the Gaullist regime, which combined technocratic commitment to economic modernization, authoritarian attitudes towards movements in 'civil society' and a socially conservative coalition base, reacted to expressions of discontent as *lèse-majesté*. The burgeoning French middle strata were bound to be rebellious. The young felt such changes with greater intensity to the degree to which they were also living a huge intergenerational drama between the outlooks of their parents and their own understandings and expectations. Add to this the traditional *rite de passage* of student *militantisme* and the prodigious amount of intellectual Leftism the Algerian War years had fostered, and one has a good recipe for the social troubles of May–June 1968.

These structural trends continued through the 1970s. For every university student in 1960–61 there were four by 1980–81. In consequence, the numbers of teachers and researchers expanded and the percentage of new middle strata segments of the labour force continued to grow, if at a somewhat slower pace than in the 1960s. Aggregated, the labour force percentages of categories like 'liberal professionals and *cadres supérieurs*,' '*Cadres Moyens*' and '*Employés*' grew from 19.5 per cent in 1952 to 41.4 per cent in 1982. During the same period the official percentage of workers remained roughly the same (33.8 in 1952, 35.1 in 1982).⁵² By the early 1980s, France's 'post-industrialization' had been more or less complete. One of the major factors for rising unemployment in the 'crisis' – beyond demographic pressures, continuing growth in female labour force participation and France's declining industrial competitiveness – was a distinct levelling off in tertiary sector job creation,⁵³ while changing economic circumstances also brought a squeeze on social service growth, public sector salaries and institutional overhead expenses.

The larger social composition of the French intelligentsia had thus changed rather dramatically. There was a congeries of groups whose work was 'intellectual,' a considerable mass with many common outlooks and practices who looked to the Parisian working intelligentsia for cultural guidance. The educational credential governing access to new middle strata jobs involved subjection to an important process of socialization.⁵⁴ Beyond a certain sense of cultural superiority opening them to the influence of intellectual

and cultural trends and fads, many in these groups were attracted to the peculiar individualism which came with 'careers' as opposed to 'jobs.' This individualism created a propensity towards a moralistic politics of witness together with impatience with the cumbersome processes of more collectivist traditional Leftism. Moreover, while many, particularly those employed in the public sector, leaned to the Left in electoral terms, they often had quite practical reasons for doing so, sometimes the corporate outlook of a professional guild, for example – the behaviour of the teachers unions in the **FEN** were models **here**.⁵⁵ The inadequacy of public sector structures, schools and universities in particular, fed periodic crises, constant worries about finances and hopes for the great funding that Left electoral victory would bring. Moreover, by the later **1970s** such groups had begun to feel economically insecure, along with much of the rest of the French population.⁵⁶

These broader trends touched the particular situations of elite intellectuals as well. The traditional Parisian Left intellectuals had been the centre of a relatively small world, few in numbers, often recruited from a narrow social base and a small circle of elite schools and reasonably well connected with provincial 'troops' with similar backgrounds and values. By the later **1960s** this world had changed out of all recognition. There were still important elite networks and cliques, to be sure. But there were also thousands of intellectuals spread over France who did not partake of **them**.⁵⁷ There might still be **Sartres** but the bulk of French intellectuals could not aspire to be or know one.⁵⁸

What does our brief sociology tell us so far? Schematically, beginning in the **1960s there** was an increase in the weight of new middle strata occupations in the labour force, particularly in the public sector, and an attendant modification of structures of cultural communications 'circuits' reflecting the increased weight in the French population of educationally-credentialed new middle class groups. As these processes moved forward – creaking and groaning, to be sure – the class structure of France was ultimately changed. One **could** no longer look at French society plausibly using a simplistic 19th century **Marxian** model – workers vs. capital and its appendages, with, perhaps, a few social oddments tossed in (intermediary 'categories,' as the PCF tried labelling them).

The new middle strata – particularly those in France's rather large public sector – brought with them their own peculiar ideological and political predilections. And at the centre of this congeries of new middle strata groups lay the intellectuals. Intellectual **musings** and **theorizings** about the sociopolitical environment, disseminated outwards through complex networks of esoteric intellectual production, Parisian cultural faddism, energetic and often quite lucrative publication **empires** and the electronic media, played an essential role in 'representing' these new groups, shaping them and socializing them politically.

The Primacy of Politics

These sociological 'facts' do not in themselves explain the evolution of intellectual thought and politics which we reviewed in Part I, however. To be sure, the new middle strata had their own needs and desires which called for new forms of political and ideological representation, and the massive presence of these groups was bound to change the ways in which French politics worked. But the precise nature of what ultimately emerged, in whose construction intellectuals played central roles, cannot be read-out of new middle stratification itself. Social trends may help begin accounting for the general political instability of all kinds of intellectuals beginning in the 1960s, but they do not explain its **more** precise logics. We need another level of analysis.

Intellectuals do not create political ideas either for their private pleasure or in immediate response to their changing social structural positions. Rather their political ideas are produced primarily to influence a real political world dominated by those who actually 'do' politics, their organizations and institutions. And, conversely, what is thus 'done' by such political actors will be the central point of departure for the political thinking of intellectuals. Thus what statistical and institutional indices turned out to mean for French intellectual politics in recent decades can only be clarified by exploring the interaction between the outlooks of official political actors and the desires and needs of the emergent new middle strata. The real drama in the situation was to be found, therefore, in the complex interactions among the rapidly changing intelligentsia, broader new middle strata groups, and the official French Left.

At issue was whether France's official Left would prove itself sufficiently adaptable and politically astute to devise ideological and political forms to *incorporate* the bulk of new middle strata energy without fundamentally disrupting its own ongoing political logic. Was an effective working class-new middle strata alliance under the hegemony of the existing Left a possibility? If so, then the basic forms of the French Left's outlook and practices, *marxisant* and anti-capitalist suitably modified beyond traditional workerism to coopt new middle strata moralistic individualism, might have been preserved into a new period, economic changes notwithstanding. If such an alliance proved impossible, however, there was grave danger that the political and theoretical structures of nearly a century of Left practice in France would collapse.

To begin the more political analysis which we need let us restate the context of the Algerian War years. The point of departure of our story occurred at the point when the PCF's tenuous Cold War intellectual hegemony came to an **end**⁵⁹ largely because of the ways in which the party's policies on Algeria alienated radical student and intellectual anti-war activists. The Socialists, with their deep complicity in colonial warfare – one important Left Catholic labels SFIO politics in this period a *socialisme expéditionnaire*⁶⁰ – and their

sordid domestic political record in the Fourth Republic, had little to offer either. In consequence, as of the early 1960s there existed little official Left space for the strong student and intellectual anti-war movement to occupy and influence. Thus, organized largely by Union Nationale des **Etudiants Français** (UNEF), the movement went ahead on its own, despite the indifference, hostility and active sabotage of the official Left.⁶¹ The result was a generational break between major parts of the Left intelligentsia and official Left organizations.

In this context of generational break, the structuralist turn of 'high' thought plus attempts by **non-PCF** Marxists to regenerate a workable intellectual Marxism can be seen as efforts to found a progressive intellectuality independent of the PCF, with the burgeoning new intelligentsia the target **constituency**. Sociological 'artisans,' at the same time, were busily borrowing categories from *socialisant* political catalogues to describe the modernizing- and occupationally post-industrializing- France which official Left reflection proved **unable** to **confront**. These artisans were clearly more attuned to the evolving rhythms of French politics in the 1960s than were the *grands intellos*, and were trying quite hard to *influence* the evolution of French Left politics through their work at this critical juncture, hence the specific political vocabularies which they chose to employ. Among younger intellectual generations there was an even broader variety of independent Leftisms. There ~~was~~ considerable young activism in the PSU, overlapping the positions of the artisans. Then, given the **decolonizing**, national liberation, nation-building events of the time, there was also a wide variety of *marxisant* 'thirdworldisms.' Here, as with the 'artisans,' **there** was an intimate connection between political ideas and political strategies - however naive and far-fetched.

The official French Left, seriously weakened by the Cold War, Algeria and the change in Republics in 1958 was strategically lost in the early 1960s. This situation was clear to elite intellectuals, artisans and younger generations alike, who had thus concluded in their different ways that the official Left was both obsolete and non-responsive to new political concerns - new middle strata concerns. The practical politics of the situation, from the point of view of this broad cast of intellectual actors trying to play politics, were that the PCF seemed vulnerable to isolation and the non-Communist Left seemed ripe for major reconstruction.

At this point the key errors were made by the PCF. Had the PCF been more theoretically and organizationally adaptable, less wedded to a traditional *ouvriérisme* which could make no serious room for middle strata, and less attached to Stalinist organizational practices which allowed no space to initiatives not controlled by the party, things might have been different. Because they were not, the major loser in the situation was a PCF which was unable to see anything in the rise of independent Left intellectualism beyond anti-communism and the agitation of petit-bourgeois enemies.

In the 1960s, the PCF was confronted with fundamental changes in France's social map. The party's misperception of this critical situation, which called for new approaches to the burgeoning new middle strata,⁶² created a self-fulfilling prophecy. By 1968, there thus existed a broad and determined network of anti-Communist Leftist intellectuals. Moreover, this divorce between the official **Left** and leading **Left** intellectuals was occurring in a context in which the broader intelligentsia, growing apace, was clearly engaged in an important '**Left** turn.' And here our line of argument about the relationship between **Left** intellectuals and official **Left** politics rejoins our earlier discussion about the changing social setting of the intelligentsia more generally.

The key factor mediating structural trends and intellectual behaviours which best 'explains' **Left** intellectual trends in the 1970s is once again the relationship between the working intelligentsia and the official **Left**. Here strategic contradictions were involved. The official **Left** had changed, committing itself to *Union de la Gauche* – programmatic alliance between the Communists and Socialists. The Socialists had made an extremely shrewd strategic bet that by 'buying' a set of outlooks from the PCF – which came to be enshrined in the 1972 Common Programme – they would ultimately be able to undercut and marginalize French Communism. The coalition logic behind this was clear. In any intra-alliance competition between the Communists and Socialists, the Socialists, more moderate and legitimate, were bound to win out. There were two problems here, however. The first involved the internal problems of both official **Left** parties. The second was that this coalition logic was at odds with the social alliance logic needed to approach the bulk of the new **Left** intelligentsia which had little or no sympathy for Common Programme politics.

First let us turn to PCF and PS internal problems. Those parts of the post-68 and **Left** Unity generations who chose to enter the official **Left**, and which undoubtedly bore with them a considerable amount of energy and commitment to force on their respective parties theoretical and practical adaptation to France's changing social structure, faced a situation beyond their capacities to shape. Those who entered the PCF brought dimensions of the '68 experience with them and changed the party almost as much as they were changed by the party. The PCF's brief, and woefully incomplete, flirtation with Eurocommunism was immensely promising as a creative political approach to the new middle strata. But this only lasted until 1978–79. The PCF's dramatic strategic shift at this point involved nothing less than a return to the most schematic traditional workerism and the surgical removal of these intellectual generations from French Communism altogether.⁶³ It was rare, subsequently, for the ex-Communists who emerged from this horrendous episode to follow ex-gauchistes and autogestionnaires towards apostasy. Rather they became political orphans, people with very good ideas and no institutional place to express them.

The fate of the 1960s and 1970s Left intellectuals who aligned themselves with the various Socialist *courants* was different. To the degree to which the PS became a sophisticated machine to manufacture political careers they tended to fight out their various fractional battles inside the party, often using quite innovative and promising theoretical and political language. Prior to 1981, when the party finally came to power, such struggles could be justified in terms of their influence on the course of future Left governments. In fact, however, they were as much struggles between elite cliques as anything else.

Here lay the rub. The PS was the key Left political actor in the 1970s. Parts of the PS were undoubtedly sincerely and creatively devoted to developing a politics adequate to the task of adapting a traditionally social democratic discourse to the new needs of cross-class alliance presented by post-industrial occupational changes. But the real leadership of the PS, the clique of Florentine *manoeuvrers* around **François** Mitterrand, was committed primarily to coming to power. No doubt, this clique cared sufficiently about the nature of political discourse deployed by their Socialist Party to make their complex coalition strategy effective, hence a certain devotion to the programmatic outlook of *Union de la Gauche*. But reaching power and staying there was vastly more important than maintaining any specific political discourse, as the 1980s would show.

Next come contradictions between coalition and social alliance logics. We have discussed the evolution of post-'68 Maoists in Part I. Suffice it here to repeat that the hothouse sectarianism in these circles which emerged from the May events could not survive the refractory response of French society in the 1970s to conform to Maoist revolutionary fantasies. 1960s ultra-Leftism had always been anti-Communist and anti-Social Democratic. In the **1970s**, given the collapse of sectarian dreams in a context of renewed traditional Left strength, many ultra-Leftists 'saw the light' and began preaching the evils of Marxism, Socialism and traditional Left politics more generally. It is quite unlikely that the official Left could have done very much to stop the hysterical outbursts of the 'new philosophers' and their friends, particularly because, in the complicated atmosphere of tightly fought electoral combat between Right and Left in the **1970s**, these outbursts were an important source of aid to the Right. The real question for the official Left was to limit the damage, and here it did not do well at all.

Those advocating *autogestionnaire* politics, perhaps the largest and most influential political and intellectual sequel of 1968, in particular, found the Left's chosen 'Common Programme' strategy unpalatable. Post-1968 autogestion thought, stressing decentralized democratic social creativity embedded in a vague anti-statist, anti-traditional social democratic and, of course, anti-communist feeling, struck deeper roots in the PSU and the **CFDT**.⁶⁴ Autogestionnaire segments of the intelligentsia supported the Left electorally, but did not recognize their own political ideas and outlooks in the official political ideas of the Left in the **1970s**.⁶⁵ PS strategists, **François**

Mitterrand in particular, quickly recognized the problem, and moved to include major parts of the organized autogestionnaire forces into the PS at the autumn, 1974 *Assises* du *Socialisme*. The PS thus made a commitment to autogestion, but the operation was not persuasive since Mitterrand immediately manipulated the **PS's** new autogestionnaires to his **own** ends in the party's complicated internal politics without really modifying the basic line of the party.

This missed opportunity had important consequences. Autogestionnaire parts of the post-1968 Left intellectual generation were never effectively integrated into the politics of the official Left. Thus as the official Left moved closer to power, a clear movement of ideological opposition to official Left politics crystallized around a 'second Left' with immediate roots in the decentralized rebellion of 1968. However, responding to the progressive extinction of rebelliousness, economic crisis after 1974 and the wave of intellectual **anti-Sovietism** of the later **1970s**, this Second Left itself began to change its positions. Autogestion was decoupled from radicalism. The goal of transcending capitalism **disappeared**.⁶⁶ Autogestion, duly deradicalized, **thus** became an appeal to de-statize the Left, for decentralized bargaining as an approach to social problems of all kinds, for a revitalized 'civil society,' and for recognition of the utility, as a decentralized mechanism, of the **market**.⁶⁷ Considerable help in negotiating this turn to neo-liberalism came from the apostate ultra-Leftists we have already discussed.

This evolution was accomplished, in part, through the symbiotic fusion of the autogestionnaires with the largely pre-1968 Left intellectual generation of followers of Pierre **Mendès-France**. From their moment of glory in the mid-1950s onwards, these followers and collaborators of Mendès-France had opposed traditional *marxisant* Leftism as archaic, holding on into the 1970s to become strong advocates of technocratic centrism. Not 'socialist' in any conventional ways, they explicitly rejected notions of the transcendence of capitalism, recognized the centrality of innovative management and proposed a 'mixed economy' which acknowledged the market's limits and the role which remained for intelligent state intervention. Above all, they stressed the need for conscious and continual efforts to modernize France and rejected the lyrical, transformative and statist rhetoric of the Left Common Programme.

As we have earlier remarked, the lifestyles and size of the new intellectual middle strata had changed in ways which challenged the traditional Left. The actual politics chosen by these organizations for the 1970s seduced some Left intellectuals but not all. This situation 'opened' parts of the new middle strata to political influences from outside the official Left. For such groups *militantisme* and older types of 'engagement' gave way to a more synthetic cultural adhesion which political parties were either unable or unwilling to provide.⁶⁸

Media entrepreneurs were quick to perceive the opportunities. *Nouvel Observateur*, a Mendésiste weekly, is the most interesting case. In the

1970s *Nouvel Obs* practically became a quasi-party, disseminating trendy cultural material – including a great deal of vulgarized post-structuralism – plus a shrewd combination of 'second Left' ideas to undermine the prevailing political discourses of the official **Left**.⁶⁹ *Nouvel Obs* was not alone, either. Concentrated efforts in the same direction by publishing houses – like Editions du Seuil – intensified the effects. Moreover, by the end of the 1970s *Libération*, an important daily newspaper, had come to play an analogous role as **quasi-party** for the 'new culture' segments of the post-1968 Left intelligentsia.

By the later 1970s new dialogues between parts of the Left intelligentsia and such commercially-oriented quasi-parties had been solidified. The explosion of intellectual anti-Sovietism occurred largely in such dialogues as did, more generally, the breast-beating, anti-enlightenment apostasy of the 'new philosophy.' The trials and tribulations of *Union de la Gauche* in 1977–78 provided new material about the evils of statism and the inherently manipulative nature of official Left ideas and apparatus, as did the major internal crisis of the **PCF** after 1978.

By 1981, when the official Left finally came to power determined to implement its long-standing programme, an important impasse had thus been reached. Much of the intelligentsia, and many important intellectuals, voted to make this political success happen. At the same time, however, substantial parts of the Left intelligentsia were profoundly, and quite vocally, alienated from the Left's official politics. At first the Mitterrand regime tried to implement its Common Programme derived reformism only then to run aground on a totally unfavourable international economic environment. Then, after a brief moment of confusion, the PS, henceforth dominant on the official Left, completely changed the way it viewed the world. After 1981 the entire PS, including intellectuals of all generations and all fractional stripes, fell hostage to the experience of power. The administrative logic of state managers – which many PS intellectuals either were or had always wanted to be – supplanted the rhetoric of collective mobilization. And when, after 1982–83, **François Mitterrand** and parts of his government decided that the time had come to 'accept the mixed economy,' and 'modernize' France, PS intellectuals were obliged to **follow**.⁷⁰

In March 1983 *Libération* rather cheerfully and ironically headlined that *Le Mitterrand Nouveau est arrivé*. The 'old Mitterrand' was a reformer who talked, at least, about the imperative of redistributing economic and political resources in France away from the wealthy and powerful to ordinary people. In 1981 he announced that '...by nationalizing industry [I am doing] what de Gaulle did in the realm of nuclear energy. I am endowing France with an economic *force de frappe*.' The 'new Mitterrand' talked about the need to increase profits, to allow the market to flourish, to accept the 'mixed economy,' to 'modernize' French industry and society in order to compete better internationally. The quest to change the domestic balance of resources in France through statist reforms had abruptly given way to a new crusade

to free up the resources, primarily economic, necessary to increase the comparative effectiveness of French capitalism and to do so in a largely decentralized, market-centred way.

The rest of the 1980s demonstrated that the political and ideological conversion experience of the PS was definitive. The old outlooks of the official Left were denounced in confessionals that 'we could ever have thought such things.' In their place came a much more personalized political life. **Ideologies** were out. Policy talk became ever more economic, riddled with 'realistic' portraits of the different structures of constraints which dictated reduced expectations and modest claims. Professions of ultimate value commitments, which had earlier been utopian socialist, turned into vague invocations of the need for solidarity, the right to difference, individual liberty, Europe's mission and the like.

The different strains of official Left politics in the two decades after the end of the Algerian War had never connected satisfactorily with important parts of the emerging new intelligentsia. By the later **1970s**, as we have seen, much of the Left intelligentsia had developed sets of ideas which were independent of and different from those of the official Left. These ideas lived a thriving parallel existence in the more general universe of Left intellectualism in France, even if they did not impinge decisively on the evolution of official Left politics. In the **1980s**, however, the situation was transformed. Left intellectuals and Socialist politicians came to accept *more or less the same ideas*. More interesting still, a goodly portion of these shared ideas had their origins in the intellectual 'second Left.'

The **subtext?** Policy failure after **1982–83** meant ideological and intellectual collapse for the official Left. Its old positions no longer worked either programmatically or **inspirationally**, to mobilize. Without some new presentation of self, the Socialists faced a political disaster. An ideological conversion experience was imperative to avoid political bankruptcy. **The PS** thus tried to repair its damaged political position by foraging through the ideological **parts-bin** of the moment. Some of its new ideas came straight from the vocabularies of state management itself – technocratic realism, proclamations of superior competence. Others came from the internationally ambient economism of the times. Many, however, came directly from pirating the vocabularies of the new middle strata groups which had earlier found the Common Program so rebarbative. The prevalent neo-Tocquevillean intellectual climate of the second half of the 1980s was in part the consequence, in part the cause, of this. In particular, the PS borrowed as much as it could from the storehouse of 'second Left' ideological and intellectual material which had accumulated outside the corridors of official Left power prior to the early 1980s. By this point, however, the ideas of these intellectuals had evolved away from the corrosive radicalism both of post-structuralism and **autogestionnaire** thought into the '**soft**' liberal revisionism which now dominates both the Left political and intellectual scene.

Conclusions: The Moral Of Our Story?

By the end of the **1980s** both the Left intellectual scene and the Left ideological scene in France had been completely transformed. Marxism was dead. Traditional social democracy was dead. Classes and workers had been removed from political discourse. Tocqueville was very much alive. A new individualism had emerged triumphant.

Part of our story ought to have been familiar. Our stress on French Communism's inability to respond creatively to changing social and political circumstances is hardly news. Our emphasis on the political unreliability of French socialism will startle few readers either. More generally, the official French Left failed to understand the changing context which it faced, but we knew this as well. We intended our discussion of these somewhat familiar matters as a prelude to further analysis, however. When the Left falls short, the consequences are usually great. But when the French Left fell short in recent decades, intellectuals played an essential, and quite negative, reorienting role in the ideological sphere of French Left politics. This is what we have tried to communicate.

Let us be blunt and somewhat old-fashioned. Post-structuralism in the 1970s was a form of thought appropriate to new middle strata which, given specific political circumstances and incessant propagandizing by intellectuals, became dedicated to a trajectory of destroying the socialist dream and establishing new middle strata ideological hegemony in French political life. Given the continuing power of French and international capitalism over the ultimate contours of political discourse, the latter goal was largely unattainable. It was the former which turned out to be most important, therefore, largely for the same reasons. The slippage of many of these same intellectuals into a microwaved reheating of John **Locke** and Alexis de Tocqueville in the **1980s** was no accident. That enterprising bourgeois politicians and elite interest should seize the opportunity to manipulate this type of intellectualizing is not surprising at all. Nor is it surprising that the French Socialist Party, during one of its periodic balletic movements of ideological vacuity, should buy into it, even though it is quite shocking.

One thing is heartening. 'Soft ideology,' the end product of intellectual activism in France, convinces little and moralizes few. Neither **post**-structuralism nor neo-liberalism with a human face will provide anything more than a brief respite for a French capitalism faced with serious decline. The French people, like **Molière's** M. Jourdain in earlier times, have been force-fed a line that 'democracy is really wonderful, we already speak it and aren't we blessed?' They will eventually deconstruct this particular text and find it contradictory when they do, for democracy is precisely what remains to be built.

1. Perry Anderson, *In The Tracks of Historical Materialism* (London, Verso, 1983), p. 32.
2. Jeannine Verdès-Leroux conveys a good sense of what PCF intellectualism was like in this period in *Au Service du Parti* (Paris, Fayard/Minuit, 1983).
3. On this period, see Pascal Ory and Jean-François Sirinelli, *Les Intellectuels en France, de l'affaire Dreyfus à nos jours* (Paris, Armand Colin, 1986), Chapter VIII. The Ory-Sirinelli *manuel* is a useful tool for our subject in general. On the PCF and its own intellectuals in this period, see Verdès-Leroux *Au Service du parti* and Michel-Antoine Burnier, *Les Existentialistes et la politique* (Paris, Gallimard, 1970).
4. Anna Boschetti's *Sartre et 'les temps modernes'* (Paris, Minuit 1985) provides a very useful sociology-of-knowledge review of Sartre's strategies. The problem of this, and other such analyses is that in their sociological reductionism they tend to overlook the importance of creativity. See also Annie Cohen-Solal, *Sartre* (Paris, Gallimard, 1985), for additional strategic information.
5. Paris, Gallimard, 1960
6. Here, for a good sampling of *Arguments*, see Christian Biegalski, ed. *Arguments/3, Les Intellectuels, la pensée anticipatrice* (Paris, Gallimard 10118, 1970). See also Gilles Delannoï, 'Arguments, 1956-1962, ou la parenthèse de l'ouverture', *Revue Française de Science Politique*, February, 1984.
7. Foucault, cited (from *Arts et loisirs*, June 15, 1966) in Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault* (Paris, Flammarion, 1989).
8. His support of the Algerian Rebels - here one should reread his preface to Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* and his articles in *Les Temps Modernes* from the period, were very important politically as was his subsequent advocacy of tiersmondiste causes and perspectives and, later, various 1968-generation ultra-Leftists. Annie Cohen-Solal's biography reviews these matters with great care.
9. See Chapter 9 in *The Savage Mind* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1966) for example.
10. On the Althusser crusade against Marxist humanism, see R. Geerlant, *Garaudy et Althusser; le débat sur l'humanisme dans le PCF et son enjeu* (Paris, PUF, 1978). On structuralist Marxism more generally, see T. Benton, *The Rise and Fall of Structural Marxism* (London, Macmillan, 1984). The Grémion citation is from the excellent *Paris-Prague* (Paris, Julliard, 1985).
11. Here see Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman, *Génération*, Volume 1 (Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1985) for the full story.
12. Even if an 'Althusserian' generation of *normaliens* would become front-line actors in May 1968 and constitute the backbone of French Maoism thereafter. As Perry Anderson noted '... Even at the peak of its productivity, Althusserianism was always constituted in an intimate and fatal dependence on a structuralism that both preceded it and would survive it. Lévi-Strauss had peremptorily sought to cut the Gordian knot of the relation between structure and subject by suspending the latter from any field of scientific knowledge. Rather than resisting this move, Althusser radicalized it, with a version of Marxism in which subjects were abolished altogether, save as the illusory effects of ideological structures. But in an objectivist auction of this kind, he was bound to be outbid.' *In The Tracks*, op. cit, p. 38.
13. See, for example, Touraine's *Production de la Société* (Paris, Seuil, 1973).
14. See Bourdieu and J-C Passeron, *Les Héritiers* (Paris, Minuit, 1964).
15. Mallet and Gorz, each in his own way, was importing 'foreign' Marxism into France, particularly from Italy. See Serge Mallet, *Le Gaullisme et la gauche* (Paris, Seuil, 1964) and *La Nouvelle Classe Ouvrière* (Paris, Editions du Seuil,

1963); Pierre **Belleville**, *Une Nouvelle Classe Ouvrière* (Paris, **Julliard**, 1963); **André Gorz**, *Stratégie Ouvrière et Néo-capitalisme* (Paris, **Seuil**, 1964). **Castoriadis** continued, until just prior to 1968, to put out *Socialisme ou barbarie* and animate the S+B group which included a number of other important writers like Daniel **Mothe**. S+B, with a Trotskyist edge to its analyses, was explicitly anti-statist and *autogestionnaire* before its time. Important **Left** journals like *Les Temps Modernes* and *France Obsvateur* were willing regular vehicles for such ideas.

16. Touraine began to outline a schema of societal evolution which posited that **classically** Marxist notions of class and class conflict were at least a solid beginning towards and understanding of political and state behaviour in 'industrial' societies, but that a very different set of class actors, goals and state-society relationships would emerge in the transition to 'post-industrial' society which was in the wings. Bourdieu, in strong contrast, **presented** no picture of the direction of **history**, instead **positing** a never-ending **process** of elite **strategies** to maintain **predominance** over **popular groups** in the **multiplicity** of arenas where '**reproduction**' (of power, status, privilege) went on, presumably including the political arena.
17. See *Les Cahiers de l'Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent*, No. 6, November 1987 for a good introduction. The *IHTP Bulletin Trimestriel*, No. 31, March 1988 provides an extensive 'generational' bibliography. **Hervé Hamon** and Patrick **Rotman's** massive, two volume *Génération* (Paris, **Seuil**, 1985 and 1988) popularized the notion and uncovered many of the problems which it posed. See also Jean-Francois **Sirinelli**, 'Le hasard ou la nécessité? Une **histoire** en chantier: L'**histoire** des intellectuels,' in *Vingtième Siècle*, January–March 1986 and Michel Winock, 'Les **générations d'intellectuels**' in *Vingtième Siècle*, April–June 1989 (this whole issue is devoted to the theme of generations.)
18. This is evident from the **IHTP's** marvellous set of essays 'La **Guerre d'Algérie** et **les Intellectuels**,' *Cahiers de l'IHTP*, 10, November 1988. To be sure, as political trends in the **1980s** make painfully clear, there was a strong Right Wing side of this generation (Le Pen, et al, **Occident**, **Ordre Nouveau** and the like).
19. See **Hervé Hamon** and Patrick **Rotman's** excellent *Les Porteurs de Valise* (Paris, **Albin Michel**, 1979) for a thorough **overview** of this.
20. The PCF, persistently unable to **cope** with any mobilizations from the **Left** which it could not control, acted forcefully to constrain and denigrate **UNEF**, the national students' union which assumed the lead in anti-war activities, and other student protest vehicles. This left a profoundly bitter aftertaste for an entire generation of Left politicized students for whom anti-PCF Leftism became a virtual necessity. The effects of PCF policy were felt equally strongly by those young people who actually entered the **PCF's** youth organizations during the Algerian War. When tensions developed between these young people, drawn towards the protest activism of the moment, and the party leadership, the leadership responded by heavy-handed repressivetactics. The consequence of this was to create a generation of very able ex-Communist young intellectuals who, given their baptism under fire by the **PCF's** organizational harshness, became profoundly anti-PCF.
21. This sometimes led to Trotskyism (as in the trajectories of **Alain Krivine** and Henri Weber) and sometimes, prodded by identification with the **FLN**, to romantic involvement with other Third World revolutionary movements. **Hamon** and **Rotman**, *Génération* I do a wonderful job in showing this trajectory as well.
22. Thus the older Cold War pattern, typified by the trajectories of worker priests and fellow travelling Catholic unionists, of 'choosing the side of the party of the working class' would be largely broken. If one was a militantly reformist or revolutionary Catholic from this point onwards – and many young people were such – one had to seek out a different form of Leftist vocabulary and project from that of official Communism.

23. It was also frenetic in its search for a new, more viable and militant 'vanguard' for the *damnés de la terre*, whether Trotskyism, Maoism or **role** modelling on Che **Guevara**
24. Luc Ferry and Main Renaut, *La Pensée 68: Essai sur l'anti-humanisme contemporain* (Paris, Gallimard, 1985).
25. See *Le Monde*, October, 13, 1989 for reportage on a conference on Foucault's politics, including his own political activities, the article by Catherine De La Campagne is particularly good. The recent journalistic biography of Foucault (*Michel Foucault, Seuil, 1989*), by Didier Eribon, talks a great deal about such things as well.
26. It is worth here reproducing Jean-Marie Domenach's commentary on this (Dornenach was at the time editor of *Esprit*). 'Doesn't a system of thought which introduces both the constraints of the system and discontinuity in the history of the mind undercut the foundations of any progressive political **intervention**? Doesn't it eventuate in the following dilemma: Either acceptance of the system or else calls for 'wild' events, an eruption of external violence **which** is alone able to upset the system?' (Cited in Eribon, *Foucault, Op cit*, p. 190.)
27. For a summary of the social theories of Foucault and **Derrida**, see the David **Hoy** (Derrida) and Mark Philip (Foucault) chapters in Quentin Skinner, ed. *The Return of Grand Theory in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985). On **Lacan**, see Sherry **Turkle, Psychoanalytic Politics** (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1981).
28. See Main Touraine, *Le Mouvement de Mai ou le communisme utopique* (Paris, **Seuil, 1968**) and *La Société post-industrielle* (Paris, Denoel, **1969**).
29. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus* (Paris, **Minuit, 1985**), published much later, but initially put together in the aftermath of May.
30. Bourdieu's actual conclusions were redolent of the Frankfurt School's pessimism about the **eternalization** of domination, but the neo-Marxist flavour of the argument was what counted. *Distinction*, published in 1979 (Paris, Editions du **Minuit**), is where this affinity is most obvious. See also *La Noblesse d'état* (Paris, Editions de **Minuit**, 1988).
31. **Poulantzas'** efforts in *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* and *State, Power and Socialism* were, of course, very important not only in France, but in the 'theory of the state' debate in Anglo-Saxon countries.
32. In the aftermath of 1968, the CFDT very rapidly changed its doctrinal vision of the world from Left Catholic reformism to **genuine radicalism**, in the process adopting a commitment to 'socialist transformation' and belief in the class **struggle**. See, for example, Pierre Rosanvallon, *L'Age de l'autogestion*. Rosanvallon was at the time head of research for the CFDT. Guy **Groux** and Rent Mouriaux, *La CFDT* (Paris, **Economica, 1989**) Chapter 3 goes into considerable detail about this. The PSU, alas, is a much less chronicled body. See nonetheless Charles **Hauss, The New Left in France** (Boulder, Greenwood, 1978).
33. We have talked about such matters in George Ross, 'French Marxists and the New Middle Classes,' in *Theory and Society*, Winter 1978 and, more recently, 'Destroyed by the Dialectic: Politics, The Decline of Marxism and the new middle strata in France,' in *Theory and Society*, Fall 1987.
34. The discovery of Freud, via **Lacan**, of the post-May generation is undoubtedly connected with personal searches for different ways of organizing individual identity.
35. The best source on this subplot is Jane Jenson 'Ce n'est pas un hasard: the varieties of French feminism,' in Jolyon Howorth and George Ross, *Contemporary France*, 3 (London, Frances Pinter, 1989)
36. 'New Philosophy,' of course, accused big think social theory, the enlightenment

and Marxism as bearing 'totalitarianism.' It was more than coincidental that the new philosophers were granted an extensive public hearing **during** the **runup** to the 1977–78 electoral season (when the Centre-Right majority was in considerable danger). What made their splash even bigger was the objective collusion between the interests of the Right establishment in using the 'new philosophy' to undercut a rising Left and certain sectors of the Left itself which disagreed with the logic of Left Union.

37. PCF membership skyrocketed in the **mid-1970s**, with a large part of the new recruitment coming from new middle strata and **intellectuals**. The **complex** processes and battles around the '**Eurocommunization**' of the party from 1973 to 1979 preponderantly involved intellectuals who were, to varying degrees, the bearers of propositions about inner-party reform involving greater internal democracy, attenuation of ties to the Soviet Union and the Soviet model, **autogestion** of a certain kind (decentralized movements for change) and changes in the **PCF's** theoretical mapping of the social world.
38. We have discussed these issues at great length in George Ross and Jane **Jenson**, 'The Tragedy of the French Left,' in Patrick **Camiller** ed. *The Future of the European Left* (London, Verso, 1989).
39. In fact, the **faculty** of **Vincennes** moved to St. **Denis**, where obscurity and neglect awaited it.
40. Rosanvallon, *Le Moment Guizot* (Paris, **Gallimard**, 1985); Pierre Manent, *Histoire Intellectuelle du libéralisme* (Paris, **Calmann-Levy**, 1987).
41. Popper's *Open Society and Its Enemies* was **first** translated into French, amidst much **clamour**, in 1979.
42. Francois-Bernard Huyghe and Pierre **Barbés**, *La Soft-Ideologie* (Paris, **Calmann-Levy**, 1987).
43. Only Bourdieu, among well-known figures, persisted along such lines, after a fashion.
44. See Luc Boltanski, *Cadres* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988).
45. *Le Monde*, October 8, 1987.
46. It is not uncommon to find Left-leaning sociologists in Paris these days lamenting that 'Bourdieu is all we have left.' And indeed the Bourdieu boutique, marred by considerable defections, can be seen to be the last remaining bastion of class analytical perspectives. This is not very comforting to the lamenters, however, given that Bourdieu's class analytical model is one of deep pessimism about change. What characterizes 'reproduction' over time, to Bourdieu, is that the upper classes always win.
47. On the fringes of this movement there also appeared a reborn phenomenological sociology, usually borrowing from American sources (Schutz and Heidegger via Garfinkel and Goffman) skeptical of the endeavour of social mapping altogether.
48. Raymond Boudon's work is the leading source of this in French sociology. See, for example, *L'Ideologie* (Paris, **Fayard**, 1986). For a very good discussion of this approach see *Sur l'individualisme methodologique*, eds. Pierre Birnbaum and Georges Lavau, (Paris, Presses de la Fondation des Sciences Politiques, 1986).
49. The mind-boggling devotion of contemporary French political science to polling and elections, almost to the exclusion of everything else, is extraordinary. The French – their political journalists and scientists (with the two categories increasingly overlapping) – have become the largest consumers of political opinion **polling** in the entire world.
50. Serge **Berstein**, *La France de l'expansion* (Paris, Seuil, 1989), p. 190. Chapter 6 of this book provides an excellent quick overview of socioeconomic changes from 1958 to 1969. The French census category for white collar workers – **employés** –

includes a large number of operatives, store clerks and the **like**. Even with these groups subtracted, however, growth was impressive.

51. The total population of students nearly doubled between **1947** and **1968 (737,000** in secondary **school** in **1946**, three million by **1%3** and nearly four by **1968)**. **150,000** university students in **1955** had grown to **510,000** in **1967**. While roughly one in twenty (4.4%) of **1946** students earned their **baccalauréat**, one in ten did so by **1959 (9.7%)** and **16.2%** by **1969**. In **1952** there were **263,000** teachers at all levels, **615,000** by **1%7 (1,200** university teachers in **1946,8000** in **1959, 31,000** in **1969)**. **2,500** educational buildings were opened between **1%5** and **1975**, one for every school day.
52. **J. and G. Bremond, L'Economie Française** (Paris, **Hatier, 1985)**. These gross figures exaggerate the point about new middle stratification which we are making. One would have to go through sub-categories and subtract inappropriate groups, particularly in the 'employees' group. Even **so**, however, the change is impressive.
53. In the boom years, rise in **service** sector employment had persistently compensated for declining **agricultural** and relatively static industrial job creation. **This** had ceased as of the **1980s**.
54. **Bourdieu's La Distinction**, whose data base stops in the middle **19709**, is crystal clear about these changes.
55. See **Véronique Aubert et al, La Forteresse Enseignante**, (Paris, **Fayard, 1985)**, especially Part **IV, Chapter 3**.
56. The actual differences in outlook between public and private sector new middle strata groups has been explored in an important new book by **François de Singly and Claude Thélot, Gens du privk, gens dupublic (Paris, Dunod, 1989)**.
57. The existence of a vastly increased number of academic and research intellectuals also fostered more professional and 'American' structures of intellectual **association** and peer evaluation. For individuals setting out on new careers in a progressively more fragmented world of knowledge and with much less of the universalistic **sprit de corps** that older intellectual elite status had conferred, the changing system established new gatekeepers over cultural creation.
58. Technological innovations changed the contexts of intellectuality as well. **Régis Debray** and others make much of what they call 'mediacracy' and its effect on intellectual outlooks. A generic version of this argument might go as follows. Television, the **massification** of a new middle strata reading public (plus increases in literacy of other groups) and the consequent concentration of **publishing** together **reconfigure** the cultural **products industry**. In consequence the field of incentives within **which** many **intellectuals** operated was **restructured**. Television enhanced rapid turnover in intellectual modes and a shortening of historical perspective. In this setting, mass publishing controlled by a few large houses sought quick 'coups' which could be widely advertised and rapidly sold. Becoming a 'famous French intellectual' thus involved 'flexibilization,' to borrow a barbaric word from the economists. Aspirants had to write very quickly on very contemporary subjects in ways which would be accessible to wide audiences. Those who succeeded often had to work in a somewhat ephemeral world of current events and be prepared to change swiftly. The rewards for becoming this new kind of intellectual were very great, the argument went, thus many were tempted into careers which involved networking from, say, an academic point of departure, into regular writing for a newsweekly like **Nouvel Observateur** and into affiliations with important Parisian publishing houses. See **Régis Debray, Teachers, Writers, Celebrities: The Intellectuals of Modern fiance** (London, Verso, **1981)**; **Régis Debray, Le Scribe** (Paris, **Grasset, 1980)**. For a succinct version of a similar argument, see Claude Sales, 'L'Intelligentsia, Visite aux artisans de la **culture**,' in **Le Monde de**

l'Education, February, 1977. From a very different point of view, and on a much higher theoretical plane, see Raymond Boudon, 'L'intellectuel et ses publics: les singularités françaises,' in *Français, qui êtes-vous?* (Paris: Documentation Française, 1981). The best book on this Parisian world of interlocking cultural cliques is **Hervé Hamon** and Patrick **Rotman**, *Les Intellocrates* (Paris, **Ramsay**, 1981).

59. The **PCF's** hegemony over Left intellectuals was relative and limited, as well as temporally brief. Circumstances of the Cold War, in particular the willingness of French Socialism to assume the critical role of the pro-American pivot in majorities after 1947, a **willingness** which obliged the **SFIO** to jettison any serious reformist intentions, left the PCF de facto in control of Left **legitimacy** in general. This **legitimacy**, extended to intellectuals, was essentially **political**. The **PCF** was never able to **develop** a **convincing** theoretico-ideological **posture** and its Marxism was always a **pastiche** of Soviet **ideas** and homilies **derived** from French politics of the day. The party's political position may have compelled intellectuals to listen to it, whether to accept or reject it, but it provided few convincing ideas for intellectuals to deploy professionally. PCF hegemony was thus vulnerable to the change in the general political situation which occurred in the later **1950s**.
60. The term is Michel **Winock's**, see *La République se meurt* (Paris, Seuil, 1978).
61. On UWEF see **Alain Monchablon**, *Histoire de l'UNEF de 1956 à 1968* (Paris, PUF, 1983).
62. Here there is a counterfactual model, of course. The Italian Communist Party, obviously different from the PCF in many ways, managed to change its approaches and its self-presentation to intellectuals and succeed much more in maintaining its **plausibility** and the salience of its ideas in the intellectual world.
63. We have talked about the dimensions of this shift in Jane Jenson and George Ross *The View From Inside: A French Communist Cell in Crisis* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985).
64. Pierre Rosanvallon's writings provide a bellwether for this very large segment of the intelligentsia. See *L'Age de l'Autogestion* (Paris, Seuil, 1976).
65. For a **solid**, if biased, **overview** of **major parts** of this **autogestionnaire** movement see **Hervé Hamon** and Patrick **Rotman**, *La Deuxième Gauche* (Paris, **Ramsay**, 1982).
66. An interesting document here is *Pour une nouvelle culture politique* by **Pierre Rosanvallon** and Patrick Viveret (Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1977).
67. The political evolution of Michel Rocard, the 'second Left's' spokesperson par excellence in the **1970s** was exemplary. From leadership of the radical PSU after May, 1968, Rocard became the challenger of **François Mitterrand's** Common Programme 'archaism' in the name of a new 'realism' in 1978.
68. One could present a similar analysis about publishing houses.
69. There is a very good monograph on *Nouvel Obs*. See Louis Pinto, *L'Intelligence en action: 'Le Nouvel Observateur'* (Paris, Anne-Marie **Métaillié**, 1984).
70. The history of all this is recounted in Daniel Singer, *Is Socialism Doomed?* (New York, Oxford UP, 1988). It is treated somewhat more analytically in George Ross, Stanley Hoffmann and Sylvia **Malzacher**, eds. *The Mitterrand Experiment* (New York, Oxford UP, 1987).