

Module 05: 1968 — A Generation in Revolt?

Evidence 6: "Address to All Workers," Enrages-Situationist International Committee Council for Maintaining the Occupations, May 30, 1968

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Comrades,

What we have already done in France is haunting Europe and will soon threaten all the ruling classes of the world, from the bureaucrats of Moscow and Peking to the millionaires of Washington and Tokyo. In the same way we have made Paris dance, the international proletariat will again take up its assault on the capitals of all states, on all the citadels of alienation. The occupation of factories and public buildings throughout the country has not only blocked the functioning of the economy, it has brought about a general questioning of the society. A deep-seated movement is leading almost every sector of the population to seek a real change of life. It is now a revolutionary movement, a movement which lacks nothing but the consciousness of what it has already done in order to triumph.

What forces will try to save capitalism? The regime will fall unless it threatens recourse to arms (accompanied by the promise of new elections, which could only take place after the capitulation of the movement) or even resorts to immediate armed repression. As for the possible coming to power of the left, it too will try to defend the old world through concessions and through force. In this event, the best defender of such a "popular government" would be the so-called "Communist" Party, the party of Stalinist bureaucrats, which has fought the movement from the very beginning and which began to envisage the fall of the de Gaulle regime only when it realized it was no longer capable of being that regime's main guardian. Such a transitional government would really be "Kerenskyist" only if the Stalinists were beaten. All this will depend essentially on the workers' consciousness and capacities for autonomous organization: those who have already rejected the ridiculous accords that so gratified the union leaders need only discover that they cannot "win" much more within the framework of the existing economy, but that they can take everything by

transforming all the bases of the economy on their own behalf. The bosses can hardly pay more; but they can disappear.

The present movement did not become "politicized" by going beyond the miserable union demands regarding wages and pensions, demands which were falsely presented as "social questions." It is beyond politics: it is posing the social question in its simple truth. The revolution that has been in the making for over a century is returning. It can assert itself only in its own forms. It is already too late for a bureaucratic-revolutionary patching up. When a recently de-Stalinized André Barjonet calls for the formation of a common organization that would bring together "all the authentic forces of revolution...whether they march under the banner of Trotsky or Mao, of anarchy or situationism," we have only to recall that those who today follow Trotsky or Mao, to say nothing of the pitiful "Anarchist Federation," have nothing to do with the present revolution. The bureaucrats may now change their minds about what they call "authentically revolutionary"; authentic revolution does not have to change its condemnation of bureaucracy.

At the present moment, with the power they hold and with the parties and unions being what they are, the workers have no other choice but to organize themselves in unitary rank-and-file committees directly seizing all aspects of the reconstruction of social life, asserting their autonomy vis-à-vis any sort of politico-unionist leadership, ensuring their self-defense and federating with each other regionally and nationally. By taking this path they will become the sole real power in the country, the power of the workers council. Otherwise the proletariat, because it is "either revolutionary or nothing," will again become a passive object. It will go back to watching television.

What defines the power of the councils? Dissolution of all external power; direct and total democracy; practical unification of decision and execution; delegates who can be revoked at any moment by those who have mandated them; abolition of hierarchy and independent specializations; conscious management and transformation of all the conditions of liberated life; permanent creative participation of the masses; internationalist extension and coordination. The present requirements are nothing less than this. Self-management is nothing less. Beware of the recuperators of every modernist variety – including even priests – who are beginning to talk of self-management or even of workers councils without acknowledging this minimum, because they in fact want to save their bureaucratic functions,

the privileges of their intellectual specializations or their future as petty bosses!

In reality what is necessary now has been necessary since the beginning of the proletarian revolutionary project. People struggled for the abolition of wage labor, of commodity production, of the state. It was a matter of acceding to conscious history, of suppressing all separations and "everything that exists independently of individuals." Proletarian revolution has spontaneously sketched out its adequate form in the councils, in St. Petersburg in 1905 as in Turin in 1920, in Catalonia in 1936 as in Budapest in 1956. The maintaining of the old society, or the formation of new exploiting classes, has each time been by way of the suppression of the councils. Now the working class knows its enemies and its own appropriate methods of action. "Revolutionary organization has had to learn that it can no longer fight alienation with alienated forms" (The Society of the Spectacle). Workers councils are clearly the only solution, since all the other forms of revolutionary struggle have led to the opposite of what was aimed at.

ENRAGES-SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE
COUNCIL FOR MAINTAINING THE OCCUPATIONS

30 May 1968

Source:

Ken Knabb, ed., *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1989) 350-352.