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(http://contextxxi.org/collapse-of-the-revolutionary.html)

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# Collapse of the Revolutionary Intellectuals

n REUBEN KEEHAN (TRANSLATION) ■ SITUATIONISTISCHE INTERNATIONALE

When the french bourgeois parliamentary republic was swept away without a fight, the revolutionary intellectuals came together to denounce the collapse of the workers' parties, the unions, somnambulistic ideologies and the myths of the Left. The only thing that didn't seem worthy of mention was their own collapse.

As it happened, they weren't that brilliant a generation of intellectuals. The philosophical discussions, lifestyle and artistic fashions that they loved were completely laughable. They probably even suspected this themselves. It was only in political thought that they appeared in a good light. Here they were sure of themselves, shining brightly in contrast to a communist party whose absence gave them the monopoly on free thinking.

But this freedom was not put to good use. They never reached a general conception of revolutionary thought. Symptomatically, in issue 7 of *Arguments* (April 1958), Morin was obliged to conclude an article full of very accurate remarks ("La dialectique et l'action") with a sudden discovery: "the greatest art, the only art" was politics, for "today, all other arts are worn out, dried up, transmuted into science or converted into infantile magic." But while Morin was completely content to have seen in passing an artistic future he had previously neglected, he forgot to add that the goal of revolutionaries is the suppression of politics (government by the people taking the place of the administration of things).

But I ask without a hint of prejudice: in what way is Charles de Gaulle to blame for any of this? Why should we be so wary of him?

Mauriac (*L'Express*, 26 June 1958)

As soon as the May crisis began, the majority of revolutionary intellectuals, along with the workers' parties, were stranded in a bourgeois republican ideology which could not correspond to any real force, neither from the bourgeoisie or from among the workers. The *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group, on the other hand, for whom the proletariat is a sort of Hidden God of History, has closed its eyes and congratulates itself on its own disarmament, corresponding only to a pinnacle of class consciousness in the liberation from the nefarious influence of parties and trade unions, a liberation that comes too late.

But the absence of a revolutionary response in May has led to the complete derailing of the parliamentary Left that "wouldn't speak of civil war." The only forces that retain a presence in France are those which made the most of the struggle against the colonial revolution in order to accomplish their programs: the capitalist reaction, which wanted to control a State better adapted to the new economic structures in the most direct manner possible; and the fascist reaction of the army and the settlers, who wanted to win the Algerian war at any cost (the contradictions between these two tendencies did not prevent their relative solidarity, and on account of the dispersal of worker opposition to Gaullism and the weakening of the armed struggle of the Algerians, there was nothing to push them into an immediate show of strength: the colonists and de Gaulle could settle into a few more years of war in Algeria, as long as they could strike a suitable balance).

With its lack of revolutionary organization and the absence of links with the struggle of the colonized, the proletariat was incapable of taking advantage of the colonial crisis of the bourgeois republic in order to accomplish its own program. But it had no more of a program than it did a leadership capable of launching an insurrectional strike on the day after 13 May. The full extent of this defeat has yet to be

seen.

The principle lesson that should be drawn from all this is that revolutionary thought must undertake the critique of everyday life in bourgeois society, propagating a new idea of happiness. Left and Right seem to agree on the antiquated idea of poverty as basic privation, which is the root of the mystification that has led to the defeat of the workers' movement all over the industrialized world.

The role of revolutionary propaganda is to present everyone with the possibility of a complete and immediate personal change. This richness that the demands of this task take on in Europe is intended to make the masses aware of the intolerable poverty of scooters and televisions. The revolutionary intellectuals have to abandon the debris of their decomposed culture and find for themselves a revolutionary way to live. In doing this, they can finally confront the problems of a popular avant-garde. The masses' right to live will no longer be symbolized by steak alone. The revolutionary intellectuals will eventually learn about politics. But it is beginning to look more and more like this will take an unpleasantly long time.

**Situationist International:** Situationistisch / Situationist: All das, was sich auf die Theorie oder auf die praktische Tätigkeit von Situationen bezieht. Derjenige, der sich damit beschäftigt, Situationen zu konstruieren. Mitglied der situationistischen Internationale.
Situationismus: Sinnloses Wort, missbräuchlich durch Ableitung des vorigen gebildet. Einen Situationismus gibt es nicht — was eine Doktrin zur Interpretation der vorhandenen Tatsachen bedeuten würde. Selbstverständlich haben sich die Anti-Situationisten den Begriff „Situationismus“ ausgedacht.

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