

Henri Simon

SOME THOUGHTS ON
ORGANIZATION

Collective Action

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INTRODUCTION

"Some Thoughts On Organization" was written in 1979 for the now defunct Cienfuegos Anarchist Review. The author is a long-time participant in the Echanges Mouvement network.. Many of the strikes and struggles referred to in this article in fact date from that period and may therefore be unfamiliar to present day readers.

We are reprinting **"Some Thoughts"** because we feel this article raises important points about the nature of organization that avoid the traditional dichotomies which this question normally raises - and in fact, escaping such traditional views is one of the author's primary objectives.

On the one hand, "spontaneity" is sometimes presented as having arisen almost mystically out of nowhere, with out clear antecedents or dynamics of its own - a view we think is sufficiently challenged in this text. And on the other hand, the role of voluntaristic groups attempting to intervene in all sorts of issues can be clearly seen in the actions of all existing parties and unions, but often not in the activities of groups who see themselves in some way opposed to capitalist and Leninist norms of organization - including many self-defined anarchist and ultra-left groups who frequently replicate in their own functioning many of the pitfalls outlined here.

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(Write for free literature list and a sample of "Collective Action Notes",)

SOME THOUGHTS ON ORGANIZATION

All quotations and references have been deliberately excluded in this article. I have no doubt that many ideas expressed here have already been expressed by many others and there will be repetitions, some made on purpose, some not. I have also deliberately tried as far as possible to get away from traditional language. Certain words, certain names produce a mental block in this or that person's thinking shutting out a whole part of their thought processes. This article's aim is to try to make people think about experience: their own and what they know of others'.

I've no doubt this aim will only be imperfectly satisfied and this for two reasons. The first, and least important, is that there are those who will still insist on putting labels on all this and on exorcising this or that proposition that they suspect of heresy because their own beliefs cannot tolerate them. The second, more essential, is that the article will say finally that our own beliefs are hardly ever swept away solely by the shock impact of other ideas, but by the shock of the clash of our ideas with social reality. Can we possibly lead ourselves out of the citadel of our own system of thought towards a simple consideration of facts? And not just any facts, but those which belong to our experience as "militants" or "non-militants." Experience, furthermore which is not just isolated in our own individual world, but to be put back into the context of our social relations, i.e. what we have been able to experience or what we live now in a totally capitalist world (from one end of the planet to the other). And yet this experience and what we can know of other experiences brings us but a partial knowledge. This is already evident for a given moment. It is even more evident when seen in a historical perspective. Even if we try to generalize experiences, observations, and reflections and to integrate them into a vaster whole, we will not necessarily widen our field of vision. It is a wholly justifiable pretension to generalize: we do it all the time, whether we know it or not. We make connections, compare and draw from these more general notions, which we either integrate into already established generalizations, or use to change such generalizations, or to create a new generalization. A generalization can serve as an opening,

because of the curiosity it gives to look for other facts with which to fill it out. It can serve as a closing, a blocking process, because it can lead to the ignoring or eliminating of everything which would challenge such a generalization.

PARTIAL KNOWLEDGE OF SOCIAL LIFE

Our knowledge is always partial because inevitably at the beginning we belong to a generation, a family a milieu, a class, a state etc., a tiny fraction of a world of hundreds of millions of inhabitants. And it's not so easy, except when the capitalist system itself takes this in hand, to widen the restricted field of "Life which has been given to us". Nevertheless this fractional knowledge is not so partial these days if we look a bit closer. The accelerated uniforming process of social conditions and lifestyles in the capitalist explosion of the last 30 years has created a certain uniformity of experiences. Even if technical, economic and

political conditions still vary to a considerable extent today, the elementary, and less elementary foundations of the capitalist system are really identical and inviolable whatever the regime in which they operate. And so our experiences and their particular-

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isms have sometimes but a short distance to run in order to accede to that more general knowledge which emerges in measuring our experiences against those of others.

Very often our experience has already found its own justification only by the meeting with identical experiences, before contact with other different experiences. And very often these experiences are synthesized by the milieu itself in systems of thought raising these particularisms to the level of Ideologies. The path of more general knowledge which is made by the measurement of experience with that of others is then obstructed by the obstacle of these ideologies. Apart from moments of violent, often heart-rending, breaks, this situation leaves us stranded in

mid-path with a system of ideas which can only translate imperfect concrete and practical knowledge of social life in all its forms. Violent, tearing breaks with the past are not the result of our reflection or knowledge which causes us to change our previous ideas: they are what our "social position" leads us to do at certain moments, (and these moments are always arriving) when our experience suddenly and sharply becomes linked and is confronted with different experiences. This situation liberates us from all screens and ideological obstacles and makes us act, sometimes unbeknown to our ideas, as a result of the elementary foundations of the capitalist system referred to above, i.e. to act in according to our class interests. It is clear that, according to our position in the capitalist system, action leads us on one side or the other, in a direction which may agree with our former ideas, but which often has very little to do with them.

WILLED VS. SPONTANEOUS ORGANIZATION

The "problem of organization" is precisely one of those very questions which is most marked by preconceived ideas on what some people call "necessities." In relation with what has been said, two poles can be distinguished:

--Willed (Voluntary organization)

-- Spontaneous organization

Willed organization is that which we wish to operate (in joining or creating it) in relation to certain pre-established ideas coming from our belonging to a milieu, for the permanent defense of what we think is our interest. To do this we get together with a limited (often very limited) number of people having the same pre-occupation. The nature of this organization is, in its aim defined by those who work thus together, for themselves and for others, that of permanence, in which is inscribed a system of references from which one can deduce the practical modes of operating. In other words, a certain body of ideas leads to certain determined forms of action: more often than not a limited collectivity speaks to and acts towards a larger one, in a direction which is inevitably that of people who "know" (or think they know) towards those "who do not know" (or know imperfectly) and who must be persuaded. Spontaneous organization is that which arises from the action of the whole of the members of a collectivity at a given moment, an action of defense of their immediate and concrete interests at a precise moment in time. The forms and modes of operation of that

organization are those of the action itself, as a response to the practical necessities of a situation. Such situations are not only the result of concrete conditions which lead to the perception of what the interests one must defend are, but also of the relationship which we can have at that moment with all the voluntary (willed) organizations which are at work in the collectivity. Spontaneous organization is therefore the common action of the totality of a defined social group, not by its own choice but by the social insertion of each individual at that very moment. We will see later that such organization has no goal to reach, but on the contrary, initial goals which can change very rapidly. We will also see that it is the same thing for the forms of action themselves. The initial collectivity which began the action can also change itself very quickly precisely at the time and concomitant with changes in goals and forms of action.

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From this distinction between willed and spontaneous organization, we could possibly multiply definitions and differences. Anyone is free to do this. But I must underline that I am talking about "poles". Between these two extremes we can find all sorts of hybrids whose complexity of nature and interaction are those of social life itself. Particularly, starting from a voluntary organization, we can finish by a series of gradations to arrive at an identification with a spontaneous organization. One could even say that is the aim- avowed or hidden- of all organizations to make us believe (it is only a question of self-persuasion or propaganda) or to try to arrive at (this is the myth of Sisyphus) that very identification with the spontaneous organization of a determined collectivity. At the opposite end, a form of spontaneous organization which has arisen can transform

itself into a willed or voluntary organization when the social forces which have created it turn towards other forms of organization and the former organization tries to survive by the will alone of the minority, then stuck in a rigid framework of references.

DEFINING SPONTANEITY

There have already been lots of arguments about the term "spontaneous" (like the word "autonomous" which has become a political word in the bad sense of the term). "Spontaneous" in no way means straight "out of the clear blue sky", a sort of spontaneous generation in which one sees rising from nothingness structures adequate for any kind of struggle. We are all inevitably social beings, i.e. we are plunged by force

into a social organization to which we inevitably oppose another organization, that of our own life. Contrary to what is normally supposed, this organization of our own life is not fundamentally a form against the

Our own beliefs are hardly ever swept away solely by the shock impact of other ideas, but by the shock of the clash of our ideas with social reality

dominant social organization. This organization of our own life is above all "for itself". It is only "against" as a consequence of our own self activity. There is a very precise feeling in each of us of what the interests of our life are and of what prevents us self organizing our own lives. (I am not using the word "conscious" here on purpose because for too many this word either has the sense of moral consciousness or, which is only a variant of the same thing, "political" consciousness. For the self organization of our own lives as for its self defense, the capitalist system is the best agent of education. Increasingly it is putting into our hands a host of instruments which permit this self organization and its passage from individual to collective forms. Increasing by its constantly refined forms of repression, including all previous forms of struggle in spontaneous organizations, it is posing for this individual or collective

self-organization the absolute need to find "something else" to survive. What one has acquired from former struggle is not known through examples or discussions but through the shock impact of experiences that I spoke of earlier in this article. Spontaneous' means in the end only the surfacing of an organization woven into day to day life which in precise circumstances, and for its defence, must pass on to another stage of organization and action, ready to return to a previous level later, or to pass on to another stage, different from the first two (the term "balance of forces" is to be located in the same area, but only describes the situation without defining anything about its contents, and about the action and organization of said forces).

VARIABLE TERMS AND INTERESTS

"Spontaneous" also refers to another aspect of action and organization. I touched upon it when stressing, in the definition of spontaneous organization, that it had no goals, no pre-established forms and that these could be quickly transformed by a change in the collectivity involved. "Spontaneous" is opposed to a moving tactic which serves as a strategy directed towards a well defined goal (inside secondary goals defining successive stages to be reached). Collectivity, action and organization constitute variable terms in the defense of interests which are also variable. At every moment these variable interests seem to be just as immediate as the action and organization to achieve the provisional and passing goals in question seem necessary. If all this can happen suddenly and the process evolve very quickly, this spontaneity is nevertheless, and this has been stressed, this prolongation of a previous self-organization and its confrontation with a changed situation.

The vicissitudes of voluntary organization are not interesting in themselves, even when, as they so often do, they weigh down discussions about the "problem of organization". We all know the type of organization meant only too well, above all among those we usually call "militants". However, it would be possible to discuss these critically in a form which remains purely ideological, masking the essential problem. The history of organization and of "organization" in relation to technical, economic and social movement remains to be written.

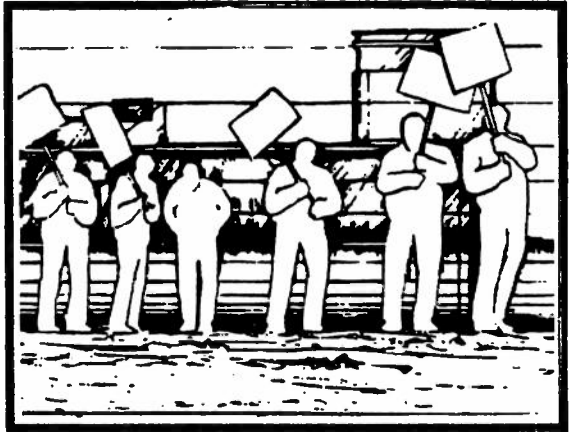
THE FUNCTION OF WILLED GROUPS

It is not the purpose of this article to write this history, even though the article will note from place to place the distance between the theory of

these groups and their real practice or simply between what they claim to do and what they do in reality, between their "vocation" to universality and their derisory real insertion into society. In passing I can only underline certain possible axes of reflections such as:

1) **The function of willed or voluntary groups.** What do they fulfill in present day capitalist society in imitation of political parties and trade unions (the great models of this type of organization), and that independent of the political school to which they refer (including the most "modern"), whatever their radicalism? (Radicalism is never an end in itself, but often a different way of achieving the same end as in other more legal organizations.)

2) **The behavior of such a voluntary organization.** It is independent of its general or particular aim and of its practice (authoritarian or "autonomous"). The capitalist world inevitably defines its function for it (in relation to the aims and the practice it has chosen for itself). This same relationship to a capitalist world imposes upon it a separation which a partisan of such willed or voluntary organization would define "despite himself" as follows: "the problem of how to relate and activity which is intended to be conscious to actual history and the problem of the relationship between revolutionaries and masses both remain total:"



3) **The impossibility of voluntary organizations to develop themselves, even when the daily practice of struggle illustrates the very ideas they put forward.** More than this, the development of spontaneous organization leads to the rejection of willed organizations or their destruction, in such circumstances, even when these voluntary organizations assign themselves a role. The consequence is that these voluntary organizations are increasingly rejected and pushed towards reformist or

capitalist areas and forced to have a practice which is increasingly in contradiction with their avowed principles. Just as the above quotation above shows, it becomes more and more difficult for such organizations which thus assign a function for themselves to identify with spontaneous organization and action. Some strive to "revise" certain parts of their action while keeping others (theory, violence, exemplary acts, the practice of one's theory etc.). And yet it isn't a question of revision, but of a complete challenging by the movement itself of all the "revolutionary" notions trundled around for decades, even for over a century now. It is not details which are in question, but fundamental ideas.

IDEA OF COLLECTIVITY ESSENTIAL

In the distinction which has been made between willed and spontaneous organization, the idea of collectivity seems essential. What collectivity are we talking about and what are the interests around which action and organization are ordered?

A collectivity can be itself defined as such by those voluntarily forming it; they make explicit their common interests, goals to achieve and the means in the collectivity, not in actions but as preparation to action. Whatever the dimensions and character of such a collectivity, this feature characterizes perfectly all voluntary organization. More than those to whom this behavior is addressed, the collectivity can only concern itself with (1) the interests of its participants alone (2) or either defend interests supposedly common to members and non-members alike (3) or either defend the interests of its members by domination of non-members, which immediately creates a community of opposite interests among the latter). According to the situation, we would then have for example, a living community (1) like a commune for example; a trade union type movement or political party (2) (many groups would come under this heading); or a capitalist enterprise (3) (a producers' co-operative would also come under this heading for even if it remains exempt from the internal domination of a minority, it would be forced, in order to function, to have recourse to the mediation of the market, which supposes a relationship of domination with the consumers). Forms of voluntary or willed organization, apparently very different one from another are in reality all marked by this type of voluntarist initiative, which is concretely expressed by a certain type of relation. The consequence of this situation is that all self willed organizations must , in one way or another, conform to the imperatives of capitalist society in which it lives and operates. This is accepted by some, fully assumed by

others, but rejected by yet others who think they can escape it or simply not think about it. In certain crucial situations, capitalist enterprise has no other choice, if it wants to survive, but to do what the movement of capital imposes upon it. From the moment that it exists as an organization, its only choice is death or capitalist survival. In other forms, but in the same inexorable way, all self-willed organization is tied up in the same binding sheath of imperatives. The forgetting of, or hiding of this situation or the refusal to look it in the face creates violent internal conflicts. These are often hidden behind conflicts of personality or ideology. For a time they can also be dissimulated behind a facade of "unity", which one can always hear being offered, for reasons of propaganda, to non-members (from here springs the rule that inside such organizations internal conflicts are always settled inside the organization and never in public).

It is possible that such a self-willed collectivity has derived from a spontaneous organization. This is a frequent situation following a struggle. Voluntarism here either consists in seeking to perpetuate either the formal organisms that the struggle created or keeping up a type of liaison which the struggle had developed with a specific action in mind. Such origins in no way preserve the organization thus developing the characteristics of a self-willed organization. On the contrary, this origin can make a powerful contribution in giving the self-willed voluntary organization the ideological facade necessary for its later actions. The construction of a new union after a strike is a good example of this type of thing.

In opposition to the collectivity which defines itself, the collectivity to which, despite oneself, one belongs, is defined by others, by the different forms which the real or formal domination of capital imposes upon us. We belong not as a result of choice, but by the obligation (constraint) of the condition in which we find ourselves. Each person is thus subjugated, enclosed in one (or several) institutional frameworks where repression is exercised. He escapes, if he seeks to escape, only to be put in another institutional cage (prison for example). Even if he leaves his class and the special framework of that class, it is only to enter another class where he becomes subject to the special marshalling and caging of that class. Inside these structures a certain number of individuals see themselves imposing the same rules and the same constraints. Cohesion, action, organization come from the fact that it is impossible to build one's own life, to self-organize. Everyone whatever his orientations, comes up against the stumbling block of the

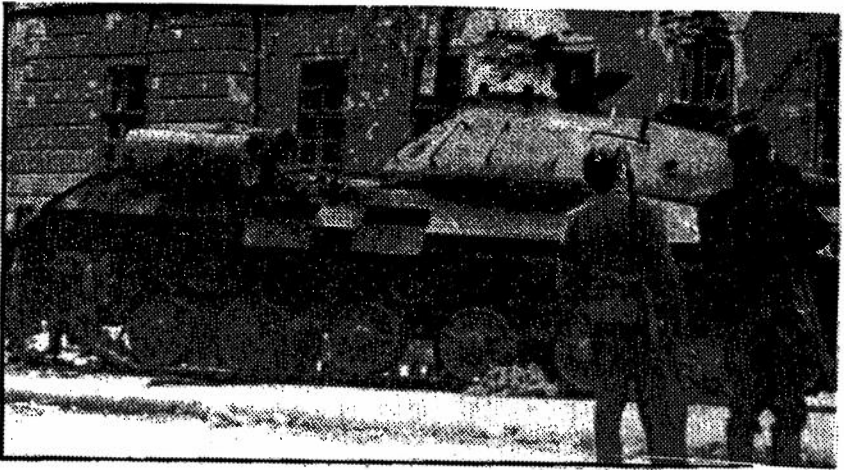
same limits, the same walls. The responses, i.e. the appearance of a precise common interest, depends on the force and the violence of that repression, but they are in no way voluntary. They are the translation of necessity. The obstacles met and the possibilities offered lead to action in one form of organization or another. It is this activity itself which produces ideas about what ought or ought not to be done. Such organization does not mean formal concerting together or consultation and the adoption of a defined form of organization. It would be difficult to describe in terms of structure the generalization of the May 68 strike in France, the collective action of British miners in the 1974 strike, the

looting of shops in New York in the more recent power blackout, the extent of absenteeism or work the day after a national holiday, etc. However, these, among others, are actions which carry a weight much greater than many "organized" forms of struggle called into existence by self-willed organizations. Spontaneous organization can be very real- it always exists in this non-structured form and apparently according to the usual criteria, it doesn't "exist". This spontaneous organization, in the course

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of action and according to the necessities of this action, can give itself well-defined forms (always transitory). They are but the prolongation of informal organization which existed before and which can return afterwards, when the circumstances which led to the birth of the organization have disappeared.

In the self-willed organization, each participant needs to know in advance if all the other participants in the collectivity have the same position as himself. Formal decisions must be taken to know at any moment if what we are going to do is in agreement with ground principles and the aims of the organization. Nothing like this happens in a spontaneous organization. Action, which is a common procedure



without formal concentration, is woven together across close links, by a type of communication, more often than not without talk (it would often be impossible considering the rapidity of the change of objectives and forms of action). Spontaneously, naturally, action directs itself towards necessary objectives to attain a common point, which a common oppression assigns to everyone, because it touches each one in the same way. The same is true for specific organisms which can arise for precise tasks in the course of this action for its necessity. The unity of thought and action is the essential feature of this organization; it is this which during the action gives rise to other ideas, other objectives, other forms which perhaps one person or some people formulate, but which have the same instant enthusiastic approbation of all in the immediate initiation of action. Often the idea is not formulated but is understood by all in the form of an initiation of action in another direction than previously followed. Often also this initiation of action rises up from many places translating at the same time the unity of thought and action in the face of the same repression applied to identical interests.

While the self-willed organization is either directly or indirectly submitted to the pressure of the capitalist system which imposes upon it a line rather than a choice, spontaneous organization only reveals its action and its apparent forms openly to everyone, if repression makes necessary defense and attack over and above that of its daily functioning. Action and forms will be all the more visible the greater the impact of these upon society and capital. The place of the collectivity acting in-such a way in the production process will be determinant.

* * *

NO FORMULA FOR STRUGGLE

Any struggle which tries to snatch from capitalism what it does not want to give has that much more importance in that it forces capital to cede a part of its surplus value and reduce its profits. One could think that such a formula would privilege struggles in firms and factories where there is in effect a permanent spontaneous organization which arises directly with its own laws at the heart of the system—the place of exploitation-taking on then its most open and clearest forms. But in an age when the redistribution of revenue plays an important role in the functioning of the system and its survival, in an age of the real domination of capital, struggles express the spontaneous organization of

collectivities in places other than factories, shops and offices resulting in the same final consequences for the system. Their pathways could be very different and confrontations less direct but their importance is not less. The insurrection of East Berlin workers in 1953 was at the beginning a spontaneous movement against the increasing of work norms. The spontaneous organization which grew out of this moved the collectivity involved, a group of building workers, away to a collectivity of all the workers of East Germany. and the simple demonstration of a handful of workers away to the attack on official buildings, the objectives of a simple annulling of a decree away to the fall of a regime, grass-roots self-organization away to workers' councils; all this in the space of two days. The Polish insurrection of June 1976 was only a protest against price rises; but in two points, the necessity to show their force on two occasions led in a few hours to the spontaneous organization of workers to occupy Ursus and block all communications—a pre-insurrection situation, to set on fire Party headquarters and to the looting at Radom. The government immediately gave in and straight away the spontaneous organization fell back to its former positions. The blackout of electricity plunged New York into darkness revealing suddenly the spontaneous organization of a collectivity of "frustrated consumers" who immediately gave themselves up to looting, but disappeared once the light was restored. The problem of absenteeism has already been mentioned. That large groups of people working at a place have recourse to absenteeism in such a way that repression becomes impossible, reveals a spontaneous organization in which the possibilities of each person are defined by the common perception of a situation, by the possibilities of each other person. This cohesion will reveal itself suddenly if the management try to sanction these practices, through the appearance of a perfectly organized, open spontaneous

struggle. We could cite many, many examples of similar events in the appearance of wildcat strikes over anything concerning work speeds and productivity, especially in Great Britain.

In the examples just quoted spontaneous organization is entirely self-organization of a collectivity without any conscious voluntary organization interfering. In looking at them closer we can see how the constant flux and reflux of action takes place, from the organization to the aims in the way described above. But in many other struggles where spontaneous organization plays an important role, self-willed organization can co-exist with it, which seems to go in the same direction as the spontaneous organization. More often than not they do so to play a repressive role in respect of this organization, which the normally adequate structures of the capitalist system cannot assume. This last

strike lasting two months by 57,000 Ford auto workers apparently revealed no form of organization outside the strike itself. On the contrary, a superficial examination would make one say that conscious voluntary organization like trade unions, the shop stewards organizations, even some political groups played an essential role in the strike. However, this in no



way explains how the strike spontaneously began at Halewood or the remarkable cohesion of 57,000 workers, or the effective solidarity of transport workers which led to a total blockage of all Ford products. The explanation is in the spontaneous organization of struggle which, if it found expression in nothing formal and apparent, constantly imposed its presence and efficacy on all capitalist structures and above all, on the unions. In the case of Ford, the spontaneous organization was not seen in particular actions except, and it was singularly effective in this situation, by absence without fail from the workplace. In the miners strike

of 1974, we find the same cohesion in a strike also covered by the union, but if it had stayed there the effectiveness of their struggle would nevertheless have been reduced because of the existence of stocks of substitute energy. The offensive action around the organization of flying pickets across the country revealed a spontaneous self-organization, even if this self-organization benefitted from the help of self-willed organization. Without the effective, spontaneous organization of the miners themselves, this support would have been reduced to precious little. In an identical domain, coal mines, we saw a similar self-organization on the part of American miners last summer during the U.S. miners' strike.

On the other hand, in a different situation, the 4,000 miners of the iron mines of Kiruna in Sweden went out on total strike from December 1969 to the end of February 1970. Their spontaneous organization found expression in a strike committee elected by the rank and file and excluding all union representatives. The end of the strike could only be achieved after the destruction of this committee and the return to forms of self-organization prior to the struggle itself. The LIP strike in France in 1973 had an enormous echo among other workers because 1,200 people dared do an unusual thing: steal the firms' products and material to pay their wages during the strike. This was only possible by spontaneous organization of struggle; but this spontaneous organization was entirely masked by an internal conscious, voluntary organization (the Inter-Union Committee) and external ones (the many committees of support). In the course of the last years, spontaneous organization has been little by little brought out, often at the price of very harsh tensions between two organizations, in the institutional framework of Capital-one organization formal, the other informal, except at rare moments. In another dimension, May 68 in France also saw the arrival of several types of organization. Much has been said about the self-willed movement, the 22nd of March Movement, the action committees, neighborhood committees, worker-student committees etc. Much less has been said of the informal self-organization of the struggle which was very strong in the extension of the strike in a few days, but which folded back on itself just as quickly without expressing itself in specific organizations or actions, thus leaving the way free to various conscious voluntary organizations, for the most part unions or parties.

Italy from 1968 until today and Spain between 1976-77, saw similar situations developing to those of May 68 in France, with the co-existence of spontaneous organizations not only in the face of

traditional conscious organizations, but also concise voluntary organizations of a new type, in a form adapted to the situation created by the spontaneous movement. Movements can develop spontaneously in social categories subject to the same conditions, without all of them being involved at first, but without being self-willed organizations for all that. They are the embryo of a greater spontaneous movement which according to circumstance will remain at the day to day level or give rise to a formal organization when it spreads on a much wider scale. Mutinies in the British, French, German and Russian armies in the 1914-18 war had these characteristics and had very different consequences. The movement of desertion and resistance to the Vietnam War in the U.S. Army was something else which became in the end one of the most powerful agents for the end of that war. Everyone can try in this way in all movements of struggle to determine the part played by spontaneous organization and that played by self-willed organization. It is only a rigorous delimitation, by no means easy, which allows us to understand the dynamics of the internal conflicts and struggles carried out therein. And so the sentence I quoted further back evincing an unresolved "problem" between "revolutionaries and the masses" takes on its whole meaning (certainly not the one the author intended). The problem is that of a permanent conflict between "revolutionaries and the masses", i.e. between self-willed and spontaneous organization.

Of course this conflict expresses a relationship which does not the less exist because it is very different from that which such conscious voluntary organizations would want it to be. The conflict is maintained to a great extent in the fact that when, in a struggle, the voluntary organizations would wish it to be. the conflict is maintained to a great extent in the fact that when, in a struggle, the voluntary and the spontaneous organizations co-exist, the relationship is not the same in both directions. For the spontaneous organization, the conscious voluntary one can be a temporary instrument in a stage of action. It only needs the affirmations of the voluntary organization not to be resolutely opposed to what the spontaneous one wants for this to be the case and in such a way that ambiguity exists. It is often so with a delegate of a union or of various committees created parallel to spontaneous organization around an idea or aim. If the spontaneous organization does not find such an instrument it creates its own temporary organisms to reach the goal of the moment. If the instrument either refuses the function the spontaneous organization assigns to it, or becomes inadequate because the struggle has shifted its ground and requires other instruments, the voluntary organization is abandoned. It is the

same thing for the defined form of a specific moment of a spontaneous organization.

MASSES AS SUBJECT/OBJECT

For the self-willed organization, the "masses", i.e. the spontaneous organization, including its defined temporary forms, is an object. That's why they try to achieve in order to apply it to the role that they have defined themselves. When a spontaneous organization uses a conscious voluntary one, the latter tries to maintain the basic ambiguity as long as possible, while at the same time trying to bend the spontaneous organization towards its own ideology and objectives. When the spontaneous organization is abandoned it will try by all the means in its possession to bring it under its own wing. The methods used will certainly vary according to the importance of the voluntary organization and the power it holds in the capitalist system. Between the barrage of propaganda of certain organizations and the U.S. union commandos which attack strikers, for example, there is only this difference of size. This dimension is even more tragic when the spontaneous organization creates its own organisms of struggle whose existence means the death of the conscious voluntary one and the entire capitalist system along with it. From Social Democratic Germany to Bolshevik Russia, to the Barcelona of the Anarchist ministers come the smashing of the workers councils, Kronstadt and the days of May 1937. Between assemblies, strike committees, councils and collectivities on the one hand and self-willed organizations on the other, the frontiers are well drawn in the same way as those between voluntary and spontaneous organization itself. The very creation of spontaneous organization can know the same fate as the self-willed organization. The circumstances of a struggle nearly always lead the movement of spontaneous organization to fold on itself, to return to more underground forms, more primitive forms one could say, even though these underground forms would be as rich and as useful as the others. Here we are often tempted to trace a hierarchy between various forms of organization when they are only the relay, one to the other, of the constant adaption to situation, i.e. to pressure and repression). The shifting of spontaneous organization leaves behind on the sand without any life the definite forms they have created. If they don't die all together and seek to survive by the voluntary action of certain people, they find themselves exactly in the same positions as other self-willed organizations. They can even possibly make a sizeable development in this direction because they

can then constitute a form of voluntary organization, if the latter has reached a dangerous level for the capitalist system.

NO RECIPE FROM PAST

In this sense there is no recipe from the past in the creation of spontaneous organization for its future manifestation. We cannot say in advance what definite form of spontaneous organization will borrow temporarily to achieve its objectives at the moment. At its different levels of existence and manifestation, spontaneous organization has a dialectical relationship with all that finds itself submitted to the rules of the system (all that which tries to survive in the system) and ends up sooner or later by being opposed to it-including opposition to voluntary self-willed organizations created to work in its own interests, and organizations which have sprung from spontaneous organizations which in the capitalist system build themselves up into permanent organisms.

To put a conclusion to these few considerations on organization lead one to believe that a real look at the problem had been made and that a provisional or definitive termination could be made. I leave it to the conscious voluntary organizations to do that. Like the spontaneous movement of struggle itself, the discussion about it has no defined frontiers and no conclusions.

CRISIS OF TRADITIONAL ORGANIZATION

It would also be a contradiction of the spontaneous movement to consider that the necessary schematism of analysis contains a judgement of any sort of the value of ideas and a condemnation of the action of self-willed voluntary organization. Individuals involved in such organizations are there because the system of ideas offered corresponds to the level of the relationship between their experiences and those of the people who surround them and those of which they could have knowledge. The only issue in question is to situate their place in such an organization, the place of that organization in capitalist society, the function of this in events in which the organization may be involved. These are precisely the circumstances which through the shock impact of experiences leads one person to do what his dominant interest dictates at a given moment. In order to better situate the question, let us look at the crises of "big" voluntary organizations because they are well known and badly camouflaged (and always recurring); for example in the French Communist Party. In the last few years internal crises have

been caused in the French C.P. by the explosion of spontaneous organizations in such events as the Hungarian insurrection (1956), the struggle against the Algerian War (1956-62) and May 68.

Spontaneous organization does not affirm itself all at once, in a way which could be judged according to the traditional schema of conscious voluntary organization. It remoulds itself endlessly and, according to the necessities of struggle, seems to disappear here, in order to reappear there in another form. This uncertain and fleeting character is at one and the same time a mark of the strength of repression (the strength of capitalism) and of a period of affirmation which has existed for decades and which may be very long. In such an intermediary period uncertainties find expression in the limited experiences of each of us, the parceling up of ideas and actions, and the temptation is to maintain an "acquisition" of struggle. The same uncertainty is often interpreted as a weakness leading to the necessity to find ourselves with others having the same limited experience of self-willed voluntary organizations. But such organizations do nevertheless differ a lot from those of the past. When looking at what were the "great" voluntary organizations of half a century ago and more, some people regret the dispersion and atomization of such organizations. But they only express, however, the decline of the conscious voluntary organization and the rising of the spontaneous organization, -a transitional stage where the two forms of organization rub shoulders and confront each other in a dialectical relationship.

* * *

It is for each person to place himself, if he can and when he can, in the relationship of this process, trying to understand that his disillusionments are the riches of a world to come and his failures are the victory of something else much greater than what he must abandon (and which has little to do with the temporary "victory of the class enemy"). Here the conclusion is the beginning of a much greater debate which is that of the idea of revolution and of the revolutionary process itself, a debate which is in effect never posed as a preamble to spontaneous organization, but which arises, as action, as a condition and an end of action in action itself.--Henri Simon, 1979

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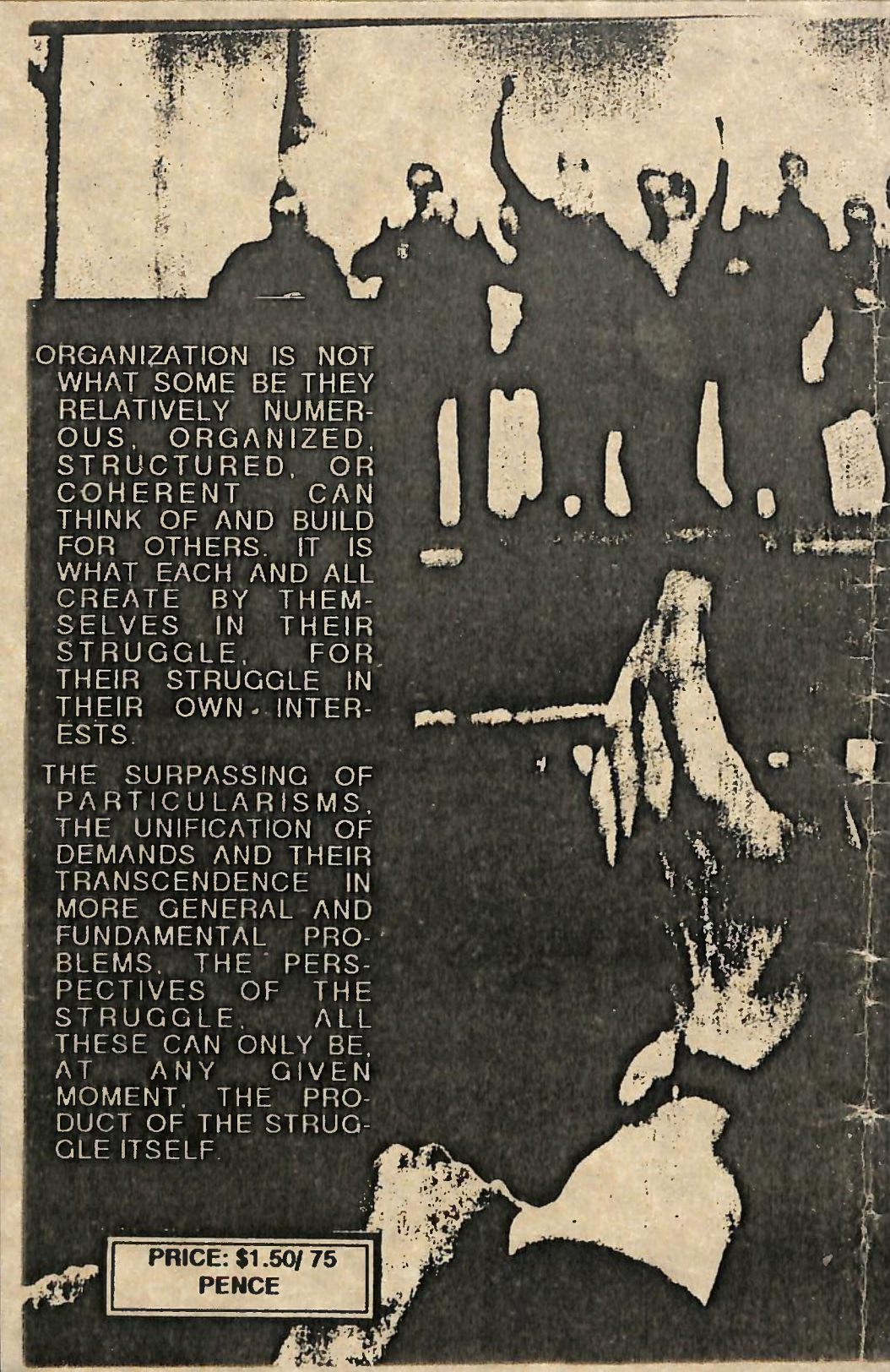
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