Vive le Prolétariat: The Worker Student Revolt of May 1968

Jack Duhan
De Gaulle

• Algerian War Debacle

• 5th Republic

• Executive Power
Les Trentes Glorieuses

• 1955-1975, the emerging consumer culture shifting away from agrarian society

• Industry and Immigration
Consumer Culture Problems

• Consumer Culture was only for the middle and upper class

• Workers were generally ignored
Immigrants

- The immigrants were forced into Parisian slums

- Horrible living conditions: alcohol, cultural disputes, no representation from government
Exploitation

- Immigrants suffered from exploitation by factory managers
- Couldn’t read French
- Feared Deportation
- Had no rights/didn’t understand the rights they had
October 17\textsuperscript{th} 1961

- Algerian protest results in one of the worst massacres in Parisian History

- Creates sympathy from some French citizens, but generally ignored. Many immigrants just wanted to be included in society

- Charonne Incident received much more attention
Indigenous Working Class

• Also had poor living conditions, population increase and often suffered lack of education

• Had union rights unlike the immigrants

• Immigrants began receiving attention from unions in the early 1960s from CFDT not CGT
Wildcat Strikes

• Indigenous working class wanted more than better living conditions, wanted “culture” or to be included in society (Rhodiaceta)

• Began striking against union representation in order to gain more autonomy
Solidarity

• As a result of the strikes, the indigenous working class was able to build a strong solidarity across all of France

• Strikes directly opposed De Gaulle

• No solidarity amongst immigrants, used as a weapon
Student May

• Increased population created larger class sizes.

• Universities were often unable to keep up with the larger size of classes

• Universities were slow to make changes: dorm visitation hours, sexual rights

• Students feared universities were information factories that created people to continue working in the established hierarchical society of oppression
Swimming Pool Incident

• Like the workers in their factories students wanted more control over university function
• Demonstrations began throughout the 1960s
• An attempt to appease the students by building a swimming pool, backfired and furthered the notion that the students were being ignored
• Daniel Cohn Bendit becomes cultural icon
On May 3rd 1968 a group of around 300 students gathered in the courtyard of the Sorbonne. (Nanterre Closed)

Police began to arrest students arbitrarily students reacted violently. Within a week workers began occupying factories
Maoism

• Slowly throughout the 60s the students became more aware of the working class, especially the immigrants (maspero press)

• Maoism also became a popular ideology for student leftists. Maoism lead students into the streets
Vietnam

- Using Vietnam as a rallying point students began to associate the third world peasant with the working class members of France

- Students began meeting with young politicized workers. Students and workers began occupying factories and universities
Action Committees

• Linked to the third worldism principal of Maoism. Action committees began to teach immigrants French and about their rights

• Action committee members would travel out to immigrant slums

• Immigrants became active in the 1968 revolt