

RG: Good sir, I will ask you please, your name and date and place of birth to begin

AG: My name is Alain Geismar, GEISMAR, I was born on July 17, 1939 in Paris

RG: In which district ?

AG: In the sixteenth

RG: And can you tell me something about your family of origin?

AG: Yes, what do you want to know?

RG: Where you come from, what your father did, your mother, the political profile of the family

AG: My father was an inspector at the Banque de France, he was at the Inspectorate of the Banque de France, he had attended a major business school, HEC, and passed the bank examination. When I was born my mother was without a profession, the family were originally Jews from Alsace, Alsace, Alsace-Lorraine, in eastern France, and probably much earlier in history. Geismar is the name of, we find the name of Geismar in small villages of Hesse, in Germany

RG: So your family left Alsace

AG: My family basically left, well my maternal family a little earlier, and again, it depends on whether we take the grandmother or the grandfather. These are families who left Germany when Alsace became Prussian in 1871, after the war of 1870, by choice of the status of French Jews I think. As a result, they encountered French political and civic life on the occasion of the Dreyfus affair and they were involved in the Dreyfusards in which there were Republicans and Freemasons. So there was in my family, on both sides, a tradition, over two generations, of a leftist culture

RG: Because your father is how old?

AG: My father was killed in the war of '40, in June '40, so he was born in 1913

RG: J '

AG: My grandparents

RG: So it was the grandfather who was killed

AG: It was at the level of the grandparents, the great-grandparents that there was this meeting

RG: So you were born in Paris in '39. Then came the Occupation. How did your family experience the occupation?

AG: My father was killed in June '40 and my mother left Paris with me at the beginning of winter '41 to go to the free zone - first in Corrèze and then in Savoie with the idea of trying to move to Switzerland, which has never been possible. So I ended the war with my mother in a small village in the mountains above Aix-les-Bains

RG: And what did you do for a living? Were you surrounded by people who were helping you?

AG: The Banque de France has always helped my mother, including they accompanied her during this period, and then I think that in my maternal grandfather's family there were resources that were accessible from time to time

RG : But with the Bank there were no problems with the Nazification of companies?

AG: The executives of the Bank were accused of collaboration, which had serious problems with the release, had nevertheless always protected, moreover at one time I think of testifying. With the leaders of the Banque de France, they had an ambiguous attitude during the war. That is to say at the same time they cooperated with the occupation authorities, it is obvious. But at the same time I believe that they had saved, sheltered part of the funds, concealed a number of Jewish accounts when they could, it was not always done. There were both, and then they protected their agents or the families of their agents. Well, it's an attitude that can be found relatively classic

RG: So you came back to Paris in '44?

AG: Yes, in '44, and there I started my school life

RG: Yes, where?

AG: In the municipal school in the seventeenth arrondissement

RG: And then the high school?

AG: Lycée Carnot in Paris. My mother remarried after the war, in '47, and so I did an ordinary schooling, of a child of the post-war Parisian middle-class

RG: Where did your political awareness date from? ?

AG: I think that when you are a little Jewish child in hiding and have understood stories and had an experience of having changed your name, of having been afraid when meeting soldiers, gendarmes, police, it creates already an important base

RG: But could that give you fear, shyness, or the reverse?

AG: I think that what resonated with this base was the war in Algeria, during which I discovered a whole set of facts that upset me. First, I lived my childhood with the portrait of

my father in uniform, etc., and he was the perfect man. And when I found out that those who wore the same uniform were torturing in Algeria, it was an extremely strong shock. So there happened a quick, immediate awareness, I would say almost spontaneous

RG: And you blamed your father, or the French army?

AG: The French army of the fifties and some. So I went to see things a little more closely. I did literacy training for Algerians, I got closer to those who were undergoing that. Before I can say that we were talking about politics at home, but at the same time in a speech where the horrors of Nazism were seen as a dreadful parenthesis that had been closed, it was over, we could live in peace, to have confidence in the institutions, etc. And then this matter of the behavior of the army in Algeria, it was the fact that it was not true, that it was not finished. Of course it's rebuilt, but I think it changed my outlook on the events of the era considerably.

RG: Did you start activating when you were young?

AG: I started to militate around 1955. A number of former collaborators who were struck by ten years of national indignity began to resurface and I remember a meeting where I had been with high school comrades, in '55. I was sixteen, it was one of the first post-war meetings where old collaborators with the beret, and then lawyers who had defended Tixier-Vignancour, well all these people, resurfaced in Paris. It was Salle Wagram, I remember, I don't remember the date. So there were young high school students, we weren't organized, we went there like that, and then there were press employees with printing seals in their pockets, book workers and the meeting was turned into a generalized brawl and they don't could not speak. We were very proud, it was maybe the first action

RG: Were they collaborators in a party?

AG: I think it must have been a mixture, I don't have the exact memory of what it was, but for us they came out of their

RG: So for you it was a bit of revenge for Nazism

AG: There you go. Otherwise I remember having been with my father-in-law, my mother's second husband, to listen to Marceau Pivert denounce torture in Morocco

RG: Towards what year?

AG: Roughly the same. So it was an awareness, it brought me around fifteen, sixteen, seventeen to feel close to those who were fighting in Algeria against the French army. And then at the same time, here there were two events. There was '58 in France, and the disappearance of a republic in a few days, the disappearance of a political system, which was something absolutely astonishing, a thunderclap, a complete upheaval on the one hand. And then I put in relation with a little before, two years before, '56, of Budapest. I took part in the demonstrations against the entry of Soviet tanks into Hungary, until I

realized that the people who were leading the demonstration wanted to go and burn the Communist Party, "Humanity", so that's fine. stopped

RG: Because politically, where are you at that time?

AG: I don't really situate myself. I am, from '56 I join the student union, the UNEF, but I start to militate, to join a political party at the end of '58, at the creation of the PSA, which was a left-wing scission of the SFIO against the Algerian war, against the compromise with Gaullism. This is the moment when Guy Mollet becomes Minister of De Gaulle, and against the Algerian war in a way before there was no political space in which I could register

RG: Because the communist students , you were not interested

AG: No, I had no affinity with the functioning of the Soviet Union, with the Marxist discourse, with all that,

RG: Going back to school, were you in higher education at the time?

AG: Yes, I became a mining engineer, I was studying what in France is called preparation for the grandes écoles scientists

RG: So you went to a Ecole des Mines? In Paris ?

AG: No, to Nancy

RG: You left Paris

AG: Yes, I was very happy to leave Paris, to leave the family world, that was the time when people did not stay until thirty years in their family

RG: So what year are we in?

AG: From 1959, and I stay for three years. At this point I really have time to be active, because the preparatory classes give me time to be active. So I am at the PSA first, then at the PSU, I become one of the national secretaries of the PSU students quite quickly

RG: Still in Nancy?

AG: In Paris, I spend my time sailing between Paris and Nancy. I am in Paris, I come back to Paris at the time of the '61 putsch and there I start to prepare something that does not happen, but which is the night base system, to try to organize a resistance to the arrival of paratroopers who disembark. And there I have an active and already somewhat leading role, because I am one of the national student leaders. It was also the time when I went from literacy to more precise help for a certain number of people from the Algerian FLN who are threatened, I help people to leave France

RG: Carrier of suitcases, more or less

AG: I don't carry suitcases, I carry people myself

RG: Yes, but where does this expression come from?

AG: It's the people who carried the fundraisers, who carried the money, the suitcases were suitcases of money (RG laughs). I was helping people get out.

RG: And who were your comrades, your friends at that time, your co-militants?

AG: There were a lot of people

RG: But give me two or three names

AG: It was at the time, I hang out with people who are the leaders of the PSU, for example, as I am the national secretary of students, it's not, I am in contact, I meet Jean Poperen, whom I am close to, I meet people who have been, Robert Verdier, Depreux, Gilles Martinet, Claude Bourdet, Mendès, all these people, Daniel Mayer to whom I am also quite close. All these are people who take a little under their wing the young promising student in quotes who is emerging with some other

RG: So for you the famous conflict of generations did not exist?

AG: No, not at all, besides full of admiration for those people who had been resistance fighters, etc.

RG: After school in Nancy, did you start working?

AG: When I left Nancy I became an assistant at the Faculty of Sciences in Paris. Finally, it does not have much interest. I had met teachers from the Faculty of Sciences during an internship. I was a physics assistant at the Faculty of Sciences in Paris

RG: You led SNESup at one point

AG: Yes, at that moment I returned, the Algerian war ended. When it ended in '62, '63 is the moment when I became a teacher at the university, in the Faculty of Sciences, I naturally got involved in university unionism as I had been a student unionist. , somehow. As a student trade unionist, I was the one, at a UNEF congress, Lyon congress, it must be in '60 - I was the spokesperson for the motion which called for the resumption of relations with the 'Union of Algerian Muslim Students, UGEMA, which was the student annex of the FLN. I had been the spokesperson for that inside the UNEF. Once the student years are over, as soon as I become a university teacher, I subscribing to SNESup, it's absolutely natural. This is the time when a new generation of teachers, especially science teachers, begins to arrive at a university that has remained quite the same as it was before the war. And here we can actually speak of a conflict between generations, because the relationship of young people to research, to the dusting off of teaching content, of teaching practices. There is a first generation of young people who have recently been students. You become more of a

teacher at the age of forty or after having spent many years in secondary education, you arrive directly at university, there is a relatively important transfer of university teaching staff. First there is

RG: And your relationship with the students was pretty good?

AG: Relations with students are much less distant, much simpler and the aspirations of students are much better understood by this generation of teachers, that's obvious. So generation, obviously there are very old people who participate in that, it is not cut. But there is a movement, including teachers who were student militants of the Algerian war, there is a very particular mixing during this period

RG: So you militated with students already at that time -the ?

AG: The view of the teachers of the time I was in on the students, their problems, what they try and what works for them within the student movements seems important to us, whereas it was not the case for the previous generation of teachers who were only interested in themselves, they were completely self-referenced. We have a business with students, some of the people with whom I am active at the time at SNESup, who are engaged with me, are among others people who have experienced the crisis of the Union of Communist Students on the front line. , the crisis resulting from the Algerian war

RG: Who left the UEC

AG: Who left the UEC in the years '60, '61, '62, '63

RG:

AG: I am thinking of Michel Combe (?), Of Bernard Harsberg (?). These are people who have kept ties with the Communist intelligentsia. There is a new environment there for me - the communist movement with which I have never had affinity before, including because in relation to whether it is the German-Soviet pact if we go back higher or the he attitude on the Algerian war, where they were against independence until very late, had largely kept me away, even in hostile relations with the communist students. And there the crisis of the communist movement and the crisis of communist intellectuals, which was extremely strong, meant that

RG: And at that time you met people from the ENS or pro-Chinese, or was it later?

AG: No, the passage of a few years when you're more of a student is very quick, so I haven't known. The pro-Chinese for me it was anecdotal, they lived in a weird country which was pro-China and for me it was (inaudible 30:17), the little that I knew, I found it rather absurd

RG: So comes May '68 and you find yourself on the front line

AG: Yes, comes May '68 and I find myself on the front line

RG: What do you mean?

AG: I am secretary general of SNESup. The heart of the crisis, apparently anyway, is academic, so things are happening extremely quickly. There are few recognized organizations that the movement can easily identify with, so it borrows spokespersons from existing organizations. The UNEF which is almost moribund at the time, which is in complete loss of speed, by internal crisis and which has ceased to fascinate the great mass of students since the end of the Algerian war, which was greatly discredited. An interim president who also serves as a spokesperson because people cling to what exists. So Jacques Sauvageot, myself as leader of the SNESup legitimized by the call to strike on May 3, '68, the SNESup on my initiative called for a general strike from May 3, '68 So it gives legitimacy and it allows people to recognize themselves in the spokespersons, and the only radically new element that emerges at that time is 'is the positioning of Daniel Cohn-Bendit that really emerged, the only one that came from a real movement of the time, which was not simply there to have accompanied the movement from an institutional position. He comes from within, from the heart of the movement. So we see this trio being formed, at the same time what is seen much less is the fact that all of this takes place in a very specific context in France. Because there were extremely hard and extremely long strikes, the Rhodiaceta in Lyon, there had been barricades at Le Mans entire nights in the previous winter. There is also an extremely strong workers' bubbling, which means that since people are surprised to see a certain number of movements dangling, it is because all of this corresponds to different maturations of movements which are more or less in phase with each other. spring, early summer '68 and the low noise was already there, all of what will constitute the movement, including the peasant movements in the West etc. is maturing, each independently. But what makes the specificity of May is that it will be more or less in phase at the same time, at the same time as a political crisis, a crisis of the Gaullist authority, finally of the authority of General De Gaulle after ten years of

RG: But at that moment you had the impression that you were directing something or being carried by this wave?

AG: To be especially carried and to be in phase with this wave, then is there a will all the same to ..? As long as I am secretary general of SNESup, I have the will to accompany the movement, possibly to be clearly in the front lines of all this. At the same time to ensure that, all the same, to keep some leeway for my union at the time, not to call for certain demonstrations or to call for them once they have reached, they have reached a degree significant police repression. At the same time all the same to protect the trade union character of an organization being at the complete limit but at the same time not to expose it beyond what it can support. In any case, there is such a disconnect between what is happening in a number of cities and in Paris in particular and what is happening in certain places outside Paris that people, there are places where people are actors and others where they are spectators. The case is complicated, in addition the television tells things which, from May 10, 11, 12, there is a great week where the information differs extremely little and the control of the political power on the ORTF is very strong. . So there are the peripheral radios, but hey, so that a union secretary from Bordeaux can call me and tell me: 'We understand that you are on barricades, but we do not see why you speak on television without tie '(RG laughs). This is to indicate that there is a shift there are places where people

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RG: But there are things happening in Nantes

AG: There are things happening in a lot of places

RG: In Toulouse

AG: Nantes, Toulouse, but not always immediately. When it starts on May 3 in Paris, the rest of France is ... but at the same time when I call for a general strike in all the universities, on the evening of May 3, it is followed, people understand that something is going on, there is the understanding that something very important is happening. In a few days we have calls with the Nobel Prize winners. It's not just a reflex, there was a kind of expectation that something would happen. We could see that there was something very important that was happening and that the response of the political power was in police terms, a political phenomenon. So that's something I think shared. At the same time the setting in motion is completely out of phase according to the

RG: And the general workers' strike, the demonstration on the 13th, did you influence that a little?

AG: Yes, yes, absolutely

RG: What do you mean?



AG: The night of the rue Gay Lussac we call, and I call in particular, the organizations, the population to come, and then the trade unions to react and when I leave this affair in the early morning I am taken to the Federation of National Education, of which the SNESup is a member, and it is there that I learn that indeed the confederations, the CGT, the CFDT, Force Ouvrière, the FEN will meet at any time. at the Bourse du Travail, Place de la République. And the FEN asks me to go there and be basically its spokesperson in this, and this is where the call to the demonstration is organized, to the big demonstration and it is I who read the joint press release, CGT, CFDT. I mean at the time, it works like this

RG:

AG: I'm afraid to speak nonsense

RG: We can look for that

AG: Yes, it's a Friday evening in the rue Gay Lussac, so it happens on Saturday and the demonstration is called for Monday 13

RG: It there was the demonstration, the general strike

AG: There was no general strike right away. There were strike movements which became a general strike by contamination. There had been strikes in Caen, near Rouen at Renault and then gradually it was the outbreak of Billancourt, which was the symbol of a generalization that took several days. On the general strike, I would be very careful watching, because there are households that went on strike of their own accord with, on terms that belonged to them, that they had fabricated. And then I think that the CGT played a big role in the generalization by thinking moreover probably what it would be necessary to do to stop the strike one day. Maybe it's easier to stop a strike that you've started than a strike that we suffered and after a while they launched their union section in the call for a general strike because it allowed them to control the strike movement, not only perhaps by thinking of the outcome and when things stopped, but in any case to have control over the strike movement, while the first strikes were wildcat strikes which escaped them completely. There is nothing worse for a CGTist, for a Communist, than to lose control of a movement, therefore all the work. I can see what they had tried to do with me their union through the other communist unions and all that - so for them a strike which becomes a workers' strike which is not controlled by them is the worst of all. things that can happen to them, especially if it generalizes and it starts throughout France. So they try to control better, to try to regain control of the movement, they go on strike, even in a cold place and not just when the boil has come.

RG: But at that moment, what do you imagine as an outcome, a political outcome, a union issue, a revolutionary outcome?

AG: I don't know what we imagine, it's a mixture of all that. In fact, a political outcome in terms of a political party, nobody sees it, unless one imagines that the Communist Party becomes revolutionary by miracle. There was an old communist militant who had become, who had passed to the PSU, who is called Victor Fay, who had been an eye from Moscow to

Paris in the thirties, who said at the time that in the twenties and thirties , in the thirties, there was a party which was democratic and not revolutionary which was the Communist Party, that the democrats were no longer revolutionaries and the revolutionaries were no longer democrats and therefore nothing prevented them from setting themselves up. 'agreement. And finally it was a not so bad view of things. So I think that what prompted the ideas to seek a spontaneous creation of the movement itself, a creation of the movement itself, is precisely the fact that there was no credibility of a union or political outcome. such as the union and the parties. We did not see, there had been in the student unionism of those years the idea of inter-unionism, the idea that through what was happening at the university, for example, we created the conditions so that the rest of the unions come and take over. You know, when the students left the Sorbonne to go to Renault there was a banner, the banner said: 'The workers will take from the fragile hands of the students the red flag of the revolution', there was no signature of the '

RG: Really ?! (RG laughs) Not bad

AG: So it was the Marxist-Leninist students who had fabricated this, but there was no signature. So it worked in that ideology, of a relay taken, but simply there was no one to take over a movement as it was happening, that's what gave all these ideas to found new logic and new organizations and new approaches. Because those who were in this state of mind had the feeling that the conditions existed except that there was no organizational relay anywhere, neither in the political field, nor in the union field

RG: Did you thought, come the end of May, June, that what was happening was a failure or that famous dress rehearsal or ...

AG: No, I thought it was neither a dress rehearsal nor a failure, it is the beginning of something but that we had to try to conceive, to build a new pattern, a new one. It was necessary, that the movement was so new in its forms precisely, not in the repetition, not in the rebound of 1917 or whatever, that it was necessary to manufacture a new political device to what was the reality of a movement. which certainly had drawn many things from the past, but which was so original that it could not fit into the mold of the political or union offer of the time. So you had to build something by walking

RG: And what did you build, and with whom?

AG: We met in very small numbers at that time, I had left SNESup for a long time, including not to penalize the union

RG: That is to say, you resigned

AG: I resigned at the beginning of June, at the end of May, I don't know anymore, because I thought that I just wanted to go ahead in building something new and that I couldn't take it - it didn't. meaning - to go there while remaining secretary of a trade union not having a vocation such as it was, such as the academics were. The image I had allowed me to take the union a little further, but I found that it would not have been respectful of what was the basis of the union movement. I would say I had taken as far as I could. So I left alone, with a

number of people. We thought we had to rebuild something, build something, not rebuild, from what had been farthest in May, and further it was for us what had accompanied the movement from the university to Flins, where there had been police clashes, to Sochaux where resumption of work had been refused against the CGT of first, then had gone up to the confrontation with the police forces who had forced the workers to resume, by killing two, two workers in Sochaux, Blanchet and Belot and by forcing the resumption of work at the cost of the death of 'a young high school student in Flins. So we thought that was the furthest point of what was done in May and that it was the starting point of building something, which from possibly local insurgencies would end up building. to confront the logic of the political power in place was for us what had accompanied the movement from the university to Flins, where there had been police clashes, to Sochaux where resumption of work had been refused against the CGT first, then had been until " the confrontation with the police forces who had forced the workers to resume, by killing two, two workers in Sochaux, Blanchet and Belot and by forcing the resumption of work at the cost of the death of a young high school student in Flins . So we thought that was the furthest point of what was done in May and that it was the starting point of building something, which from possibly local insurgencies would end up building. to confront the logic of the political power in place was for us what had accompanied the movement from the university to Flins, where there had been police clashes, to Sochaux where resumption of work had been refused against the CGT first, then had been until " the confrontation with the police forces who had forced the workers to resume, by killing two, two workers in Sochaux, Blanchet and Belot and by forcing the resumption of work at the cost of the death of a young high school student in Flins . So we thought that was the furthest point of what was done in May and that it was the starting point of building something, which from possibly local insurgencies would end up building. to confront the logic of the political power in place

RG: Because when you say "we", that's when

AG: "We" is a small handful of people, me, Serge July

RG: And when did you meet Serge July by example?

AG: During the time of the movement, I got closer and then I participated in the movement of March 22, that's where I met him

RG: He was on March 22? I did not know

AG: Yes, yes. From the 8, 10 but, something like that, there had been a demonstration which had dispersed, it is the moment when the UNEF was negotiating with, well, these stories are complicated. There were more or less secret negotiations on whether a certain number of people would be released who had been imprisoned in the first demonstrations, who had been arrested in the first demonstrations, but only they wanted to free the French and not the foreigners and all that, so I had found it atrocious, this acceptance in the name of this negotiation, and therefore an interruption of a demonstration, the request to stop a demonstration to allow this negotiation. So that's where I felt the need to go and report on the situation and my state of affairs.

RG: And you wrote Into Civil War at that time?

AG: Yes, in the fall

RG: And it's a pretty sensational title

AG: Yes

RG: What were you thinking?

AG: We thought that there would really be popular uprisings here and there and that these uprisings would be repressed in blood, as in Sochaux or Flins. And we thought that the time for the movement to catch its breath and the outcome of the Grenelle agreements did not correspond to a certain number of workers' aspirations as we had been able to perceive them, even from a distance, the OS movement, the movement against the Taylorist organization of work, finally a whole series of phenomena. We had seen the rise of a movement of young workers, young OS extremely powerful against the organization of work, we thought that it was going to provoke movements here and there and that these movements the political power would repress them in blood and that what was a necessity

RG: And this political device?

AG: It was the Proletarian Left

RG: So when did you meet those who had led?

AG: Winter '68 -'69 ', January-February by there

RG: And who in particular?

AG: Benny Lévy, essentially Benny Lévy and then it was he who introduced us to his comrades. We had a cycle of discussions with Benny Lévy to try to compare our points of view, we knew that he had been, like us, up to Flins, and we needed to confront our views on the situation, on what was appropriate to do, but also to examine what could be, was there a common body of thought, of logic

RG: Because in Flins you were more with March 22?

AG: Yes

RG: The Maoists were there too?

AG: Yes, that's it. We felt that this is where there was, that this meeting could be the foundation of something

RG: And you found it, Benny Lévy, how? As a political leader

AG: First as an interlocutor, I only saw him in a position of political leader, that is to say with his own comrades, later. We first had a very long cycle of explanations in small groups. He was an extremely attractive intellectual, intellectually very powerful, very fast, who had a political culture that I did not have for example. I had an extremely banal and vulgar knowledge of Marxism, Leninism, of the history of the workers' movement as they said, for me it all existed. I had read a bit like everyone else, but like a good leftist activist, I knew more or less what was going on in there, but there we were dealing with someone, his studies in philosophy, he was a pupil of Althusser, he was in any case in that field, he had a certain mastery of all this thought and on the other hand was an excellent, I would say not a speaker because it was in a small group, but he was very brilliant in the discussions. Serge July, who was with me, perhaps knew all these things better than I did, had become more acculturated to this culture, he had been one of the leaders of the Union of Communist Students, which no longer had that culture. I no longer came from social democracy as a margin of thought he had been one of the leaders of the Union of Communist Students, which had more of that culture. I no longer came from social democracy as a margin of thought he had been one of the leaders of the Union of Communist Students, which had more of that culture. I no longer came from social democracy as a margin of thought

RG: Can you explain to me what brought you to your trial, for example in '70, how did it go?

AG: To understand, not only did we agree on the fact that the logic that I explained to you earlier was the one that was most likely to occur and that we had to prepare for it. . A certain number of militants on the one hand swarmed in the factories and practiced what was called the establishment, that is to say installed themselves as OS in a series of factories which it was thought that, given their characteristics, that they were conducive for something to happen, young workers, OSe and not skilled workers - the CGT's goodwill is the P3, the highly qualified professional worker. So that, work in schools and universities to maintain a level of, to participate in the boiling that continues, maintain that at a level, including to feed the establishment, and then a certain number of symbolic actions to bear witness, to manifest, to make clear, to make this process visible. There are actions that are carried out the following year in Flins on the anniversary date of what happened in '68, Fauchon a little later, well I think you know what I mean, we are looking for actions that shed light on this in-depth work which is carried out by activists, activist groups - almost individually activists, moreover, more than groups. Since it is activists who are effectively in places that we consider to be more or less strategic who are hired and who have a vocation to create groups around them, in a dialectic for the coup between the work they do inside the factory and possibly groups of young people who distribute leaflets at the door to tell what is happening inside. What role did I have in there? A relatively weak role, at the beginning I take part in the meetings and from the moment when - and one creates a newspaper, The Cause of the People, which is the resumption of a newspaper that the Marxist-Leninists had made but which takes a very particular, which is the reflection of the struggles such as we consider to be those which correspond to the way, to go quickly, with a very particular style, very expressive and hard, and which is close to the style precisely of these young rebellious OS factory and possibly groups of young people who distribute leaflets at the door to tell what is going on inside. What role did I have in there? A relatively weak role, at the beginning I take part in the meetings and from the moment when - and one creates a newspaper, The Cause of the People, which is the resumption of a newspaper

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RG: But quite violent

AG: Yes violent, but the young OS of the time do not mince their words either, it is something which is conceived and constructed in mirror and close to what is already expressed. We still have to measure that in the year '70, '71 the Center National du Patronat Français, which is not the most leftist place in France, lists one boss's confinement per week

RG: But it was not your idea , was it the idea of the OS all that, kidnapping?

AG: Yes, yes

RG: Who had a pre-story, where did it come from? Maybe in '36?

AG: '36 it's a general strike, I think it's rare, it's a strike with occupation of the factory, kidnapping, it's more of a sixty-eight mode,

RG: Is it an Italian thing, an Italian practice?

AG: I don't know, I couldn't say. It happened, and it spread like an oil stain, we can maybe find the traces, but I never looked, I don't know. But it is the idea that there is not an abstract employer, but that it is the one we have at hand who is responsible, who must decide. That is clear, and perfectly clear. It is perfectly clear, just as the unions do not have much of a role in this, it is really the real worker and the real boss who confront each other around a particular demand, a particular challenge to the practice of hierarchy is a very strong moment of struggle against small bosses. So it

RG: Do you have any contacts, because quite a bit, a large part of these OS were of Algerian origin

AG: No, well yes and no, that's the beginning of that: most of the OS in the 'At the time, it was peasants who left their farm to become factory workers, the bulk of the OS is in the process of being made, this mutation that began around '65, '66, '67, but the first wave of SO recruitment coincides with the disappearance of the French peasantry. In any case, a mixture of the two, now in the large large factories of the Parisian suburbs is something

else, there is indeed a recruitment, but it is a mixture, a strange mixture of recruitment between the original workers. North African, Algerian mainly but not only,

RG: But is it the Palestinian uprising that is mobilizing the Algerians a little?

AG: Not at all, it comes much later, '72, when there are conflicts between Algerians and Moroccans because there are border conflicts, because there are lots of conflicts. On the contrary, it is the politicians who seek who can be a point of unity of people who are in conflict and who offer them in a certain way the Palestinian image as a point of same construction as that which occurs in the Arab countries, finally of the unity, the internal conflicts by fabricating a heroic reference image

RG: But you yourself launched an appeal to the Palestinians?

AG: What did I do? I think first I have been, it is a business that is, the journey does not have much interest. But Benny Lévy was from Egypt, one of his brothers, much older than him, had been Egyptian Communists, who had been imprisoned under Nasser, Mahmoud Hussein. Well, I don't see if you can see, because there were lots of books, and he converted to Islam, Benny's brother

RG: Ah well, okay, I didn't know

AG: So it is perhaps through this channel that we started to be interested in the Palestinian affair and that I found myself in the summer of '69 or '70, I don't know anymore, going to the Palestinian refugee camps and come back with the idea that we could indeed take an interest in this dimension in order to try to build a unit of young immigrants. Did I make an appeal? I don't think so, but on the other hand when I was in prison people used my name for

RG: Yes, I think about that

AG: 'Geismar, Arafat', I don't know what, but it's not me who, well it's not me singularly

RG: But then tell me about the trial and then the prison, how did the trial go, what event was it for?

AG: It's very simple: The Cause of the People was banned in each issue and then they imprisoned two successive directors, Jean-Pierre Le Dantec and Michel Le Bris. Michel Le Bris was accused of arson for signing an article in which it was written: 'There is not one who can set the whole plain on fire' and when he arrived in prison they took him away his matchbox (RG laughs). So there was that and the newspapers were seized regularly. I went to find Jean-Paul Sartre and I asked him if he would agree to take the direction of the newspaper, well history that he is known, no further. So from that point on, they couldn't jail the directors anymore. I think that's when the decision to stop, to put me in prison was taken, because they needed to show symbolically, politically, that such a movement could not continue. As you could no longer put the directors of the newspaper in prison, you had to go after someone who was even more symbolic than a newspaper editor because I had

been one of the spokespersons for '68, if the power was able to stop the spokesperson of '68 who became the spokesperson for the most advanced revolutionary movement of the time, it proved that he had the strength to break everything. So the decision was taken there, I called for a demonstration on the day of the trial of Le Dantec and Le Bris, so I was accused of calling for violence followed by acts against law enforcement officers, which is the legal translation of the call for a prohibited demonstration in France, since there is always a police officer when there is a prohibited demonstration which is maintained, which occurs, there is always one injured. somewhere. So there you have it, that's what led me to do eighteen months in prison, at that time, the summer of '69

RG: There were two trials?

AG: There were two trials: there was a classic correctional trial on this demonstration and the day I was arrested, I was arrested with a paper in which I said, they had decided to dissolve the Proletarian Left, to ban the organization. And I was arrested with a paper that I sent to my comrades in which I said: 'We must not rebuild the Proletarian Left and not maintain it, we must do something else'. And this paper served as the basis for them to declare that it was proof that I was putting it together. So they sent me to the State Security Court which was a military tribunal for re-enactment of dissolved league, undermining state security, etc.

RG: And was it eighteen months?

AG: Yes

RG: So when did you go out?

AG: In '71, winter '71

RG: Did the period in prison change your ideas, or your strategies?

AG: Well, I first read

RG: A bit of Marx?

AG: Yes! A lot, even ! (RG laughs) At first not at all, because there were no books like that in the prison library

RG: Which prison was it?

AG: It was in Fresnes. There weren't any such books, so I started to be able to bring in books after a hunger strike, because we were entitled to one book a week, it was a bit short (Laughs from RG)

RG: For people who didn't read ...



AG: I read the Bible at the beginning, it was good, I didn't know at all. And then after a hunger strike we had the right to have a radio station, to have newspapers, censored but well, to have books as long as they were published in France. So I read a lot, yes

RG: But that is to say that when you left you were still in the revolutionary movement?

AG: Yes, I think that prison is not a real, a good soothing instrument

RG: But you started over, but started again differently?

AG: Yes. The movement itself had changed, in eighteen months it had rather broadened. There was Red Aid, there was a movement of intellectuals we called 'vigilant', there was J'accuse which was a larger newspaper than La Cause du Peuple, finally La Cause du peuple still existed, so the movement had resembled around it a whole group of people who were called in the jargon of the time the 'democrats' - rtre, Foucault, Maurice Clavel and all those people. I was at the same time in the management team of the movement but I was also, I became the one who was the image and the spokesperson of the movement in this broad sector

RG: Was there special moments, significant incidents for you at that time?

AG: Yes, because very early on there was the assassination at Renault of Pierre Overney. So it was in a period of both militant escalation and democratic enlargement, a rather complicated thing. We found bodies, finally there was a repression against, there were assassinations of Algerians in a significant way, which was imputed, which we had imputed to the police at the time

RG: There was a case in The Goutte d'Or

AG: Yes. All this made one think of what had happened during the end of the Algerian war, at the time of the great demonstrations of the FLN where there had been Algerians thrown into the Seine, the time when Papon was the prefect of police. For us there was a kind of continuity in the police approach there, so we called for a demonstration which we thought would be violent since it was the police who were implicated in the murders. It was while distributing a leaflet to call for this demonstration that Overney was killed. So it was a big shock at first and a big turning point. We can at the same time say that it corresponded to things that we had imagined for a long time, that on the occasion of something in front of a factory the firearms come out, and that they come from the management or police side. It was not the revolutionary movement that opened fire. It was then that we began to realize quite clearly that the main risk we were running was that the revolutionary organization itself would come face to face, find itself in a escalation in front of the state police apparatus. And that in our eyes this was not what could have been a revolutionary movement, if it could have been a revolutionary movement, it would have been a clash between the masses and the state apparatus. From the moment there was the non-negligible risk that it would be between us and the police, or us and the State that the confrontation would take place, there was something that was, that we did not want to assume, that '

RG: But did you consider that the masses were no longer with you?

AG: It was complicated, because at the same time there were never as many people as at Overney's funeral

RG: But it was a funeral

AG: But it was a funeral. That said, your reaction, seen today, is this, it must be seen that for a whole series of our comrades, militants who were with us at the time, they saw masses, they did not see the world. 'burial. So we started to have a management team that had seen the funeral and an organization that we had created, which was more in a logic of revenge. If you reread the speech I gave at the cemetery at Pierrot's funeral, I condemn the ideology of revenge, but it was not easy. So this is probably where one of our first dropouts occurs, which will lead to the dissolution by ourselves in the next two years, of our militant team. There is that,

RG: And it's without you!

AG: And it's without us, at least with a weak influence on our part and so to go as far as the workers of Lip they don't need the Proletarian Left or the Maos, since we call that like that at the time, it seems that the peasants of Larzac did not need revolutionary groups to build their resistance and their subversion. Between the fact that we risk to embody an escalation, a face to face of an organization with the State and the fact that in a factory where the most advanced things occur in the logic of '68, if you will , or in a place like Larzac which federates all that can federate, like Lip moreover, all that France can concentrate of subversive energy, that there is no need there of militants.

RG: Who came in around '73?

AG: '72, '73, because it takes time, you have to be able to explain that to everyone, which is not extremely easy

RG: And you, where did you go? There was the foundation of Liberation for example at that time

AG: Yes, well I am one of those who encourage the foundation of Liberation but I do not come back, I feel the need to rebuild myself through an activity professional let's say. I continue to see Serge July or people like that, well I am not at the heart of the Liberation machine, of the creation of Liberation, I participate but with a certain hindsight

RG: So you have resumed your work at the university?

AG: The work at the university has been resumed since my release, since '71, first through a few vacations, some contractual allowances, since I no longer have the right to be a teacher, and then there is 'Giscard amnesty, so '74, and there the university is fighting for my reinstatement, which is signed in '78

RG: So you had to wait until '78 to return

AG: Return to university fully. Before I did some lessons, well like that, it was marginal, on the side. And there I resume a real professional activity, I take responsibilities at the university. University which welcomed me, protected, supported me, which was extremely welcoming towards me during all this period, extremely benevolent, and towards which I have the feeling to have a kind of debt, by agreeing to take some responsibilities, that's part of it all

RG: Stupid question from an academic: Didn't you feel that research had eluded you for ten years?

AG: Absolutely, totally

RG: So what does it do?

AG: Beh, I got myself, it got me to do two things. On the one hand - well, I was in an extremely specialized research site, I was in the physics laboratory of the Ecole normale supérieure, Kastler had won his Nobel Prize there. Okay, so I was off the hook, completely off the hook. When I was released from prison I tried to read the activity reports of my laboratory. It had happened, especially in the field of condensed matter physics, solid state physics as we said at the time, it had happened in five, six years as much as in the previous century, so this are extremely rapidly moving fields. So I took care of continuing education, I took charge of a whole new sector of the university which was the reception of non-graduates, the entire adult training system. I got more into teaching just to be clear than anything else, and then I took on administrative responsibilities, and as people otherwise considered that I had been a decent researcher at one time, it what happened

RG: What about your personal life?

AG: That is to say?

RG: Did you ever get married?

AG: I was married in '65, I had a child in '68, I rather divorced, I separated from my first wife

RG: Following events or?

AG: Yes, yes, I think we can say following these events, I do not know what would have happened otherwise, but not by ideological or political disagreement, but by

RG: I do not know, as a husband I see how badly we can lead together an activist life like that and a normal family life

AG: Of course

RG: And then politically

AG: Politically there was no disagreement

RG: No but I mean later

AG: And then I remarried, finally I found a partner and then I married her years later, much later, in the mid-1970s. So we are still married

RG: And from the point of view of political career, political trajectory, you have approached the Socialist Party?

AG: During a whole series of years I took care of university life, I took responsibilities at the university. It was absolutely going, I headed a continuing education department. Then I was vice-president of the university, I acted as president of the university for a whole period, since I was the first vice-president and the president was ill

RG: Still at the university of Science

AG: It was the University of Paris VII at the time, since the universities were cut off, so I managed Paris VII completely, it was no longer the Faculty of Sciences, it was Letters, Sciences, Medicine, a third, third, third. Professionally what happened to me afterwards? I participated extremely strongly in all that was the computerization of the university itself, and the establishment of an education related to computer science, new technologies, etc., that is to- say a modernization of the teaching of this university and its operation, its management. This put me in contact with the people who were making breakthroughs in the field of computer science in France, and just as I was no longer a researcher in a laboratory, etc.,

RG: When was that?

AG: '82, '83, this way, '84. And during that whole time, I haven't been in active politics, ever. I needed to rebuild myself, not to go from one strong ideological identity to another by a little jump like that. So I had not even called to vote for Mitterrand in '81. And on the other hand I felt immense satisfaction when he was elected, which surprised me myself.

RG: Did you still vote for him?

AG: Yes. From the moment the Socialist Party got in trouble in the years '85, '86 I got a little closer, so I participated in working groups, reflection groups, and from '86 to '88 I became one of the heads of Lionel Jospin's expert groups, I was brought there by Claude Allègre, who was one of my physicist colleagues from the same university, who introduced me to Lionel Jospin, who was first secretary of the Socialist Party and therefore I participated in all the work that was done for example between '86 and '88 to prepare for the re-election of François Mitterrand. It was then that I returned to the party, I returned, I became, I took responsibility for a group of experts and then I took my Socialist Party card,

RG: And then when Jospin became Prime Minister

AG: Before he became Minister in '88 and there I found myself in the ministerial teams from that moment, but good at vocational training, then at Education national with Jospin, etc.

RG: You followed in Jospin's footsteps a bit, during those years

AG: Yes

RG: Until 2002?

AG: Until 2002, yes

RG: And then now?

AG: From 2001 I found myself in Bertrand Delanoë's team at the mayor of Paris

RG: He became mayor in what year?

AG: 2001

RG: And what was your job with him?

AG: Adviser

RG: What does advising consist of?

AG: Private office

RG: Give me an example of something that

AG: I was in charge with him for everything that was the school, university, research, technology, on the one hand, and on the other hand, I followed for him the relations with the institutions and the Jewish community, for example, throughout the period when there were anti-Semitic attacks

RG: Because, do you have your Jewish origin? has become more important?

AG: Yes and no, not really, I don't know

RG: For example, in the case of Benny Lévy, it has become very important

AG: In the case of Benny Lévy, I followed myself, I continued to see him until his death from time to time, in terrible confrontations on this kind of subject, because I have no, I am someone who does not experience any religious anguish. Yes, religion, I don't know what it is, it's a separate universe, it's the same with Benny

RG: And it was difficult, the separation?

AG: Yes, yes, of course, we were extremely close, we have remained so, in a strong emotional relationship, but I absolutely did not accompany him on his journey. I could completely respect people's religious convictions, I find that quite normal, I have no problem with that, I remain very attached to freedom of conscience

RG: One last question, it's about your attitude now, and it has materialized a bit, crystallized, because Sarkozy made this famous speech last month and you answered with Cohn-Bendit on this

AG: With a little humor anyway, in any case we tried to do it with humor

RG: He doesn't do it with humor his speech

AG: Sarkozy? Him, no

RG: He was serious, but I do not understand his objective, it is to attract votes from the anti-sixty-eighters, what does he want to do?

AG: I think there are two things, his speech is articulated - I tried to read it a bit - in particular on two themes: the fight against relativism, so I asked myself: 'Why this word?' which is not current in the French political discourse, at all, on the other hand it is the complete discourse of Benedict XVI, it is the heart of the approach of Benedict XVI even before he becomes pope and that he reproduce by becoming pope, on the reestablishment of absolute values, which are for him his church and his spiritual corpus. It is only here that we have seen the struggle against relativism appear in the field of discourse for ten or twenty years. Obviously, Sarkozy has appropriated that, I think we will have to dig further to see, him, we can see what he is putting behind, because he explains ... well, that's one thing. The other aspect of Sarkozy's speech is what he says about cynicism, in which he makes '68 responsible for the golden parachutes of the big bosses, and here I must say that I still have not understood the filiation that it leads there. Me what strikes me, good cynicism, I think we have to think about what he meant, it did not fall like that from the sky, nor accidentally, especially since he repeated things, he did so at several times. So this is something important in the construction of his political discourse, but as much on relativism we can come to understand what we can find. Anyway the idea of there being a single talk on '68 is silly, I mean in itself it's stupidity, because '68 is a movement, a coincidence of movements, and there is not a constructed discourse, a uniqueness of discourse neither at the moment when the event is constructed, nor at the moment of '68, nor afterwards in the sequence of things. And if we look for example at Ferry in his work, Ferry and Renault in their work on *La Pensée de '68*, we see that there is very little question of '68 and a lot of structuralism, and that to reduce '68 to structuralism is in my opinion not far from an intellectual swindle. Okay, that's a separate thing. The other thing, which is important I think in what Sarkozy is trying to do, is he tries to awaken the nostalgia for before-'68, therefore for a time when things were, in that nostalgia, in order, the family was in order, the school was in order, etc., etc., so it is literally reactionary, or counter-revolutionary, restoration thinking, roughly speaking, what he projects onto the political scene is the idea that him, he will restore the

old order, the order that prevailed before '68, with perhaps in subliminal the image, the authority of General De Gaulle or something like that, to build a character of President of the Republic . I think that is quite solid and plausible, I do not know if the French have the reflex to think a little, if they are ready for the minimum wage to lose thirty percent of its value next week. , if the employer's authority and that of the foremen must be restored, if the family, etc., if we have to put the little girls in pink aprons and the little boys and blue aprons to go to school. But it is all the same this image of a restoration of the old order of which he wants to present himself as the bearer. There you have it, I understand that, I understand what he said about relativism, because it is true that in '68 the absolute authority of divine right is still largely undermined and contested, so we can decline that, political cynicism, may have to wait for further developments in the thought of the President of the Republic

RG: But in your answer you must have, with the space you have, somewhat framed '68 as anti-authoritarian

AG: Of course

RG: So you think that there is a background of something in '68

AG : Ah yes, absolutely, there is a background, now, I think above all that '68 is deeply digested by society forty years later, the social body has made its own selection, rejected what did not suit it and took in the thoughts of '68 and the thoughts of the sequel what suited him and what he rejected, I am not saying that it is inscribed for eternity, but I think that there is a kind of metabolism that s 'is produced, it becomes very difficult to discern today what is in direct trace, because all this is still very seriously

RG: And yourself, are there things that you deny, that you reject or do you take responsibility for everything that happened at that time?

AG: To assume surely, that does not prevent me from rejecting a lot of things, I think I would not have been a companion of the Socialist Party or of Lionel Jospin if I had remained the same as what I was or what I was. Bertrand Delanoë if I had remained in the state of mind of the time. So I think that already in '68 we could ask questions about what the concept of revolution and revolutionary meant, I had also mentioned at the university conference in Amiens a few months before, before '68. But today all that does not make sense, in addition at the same time there was a thought which was inscribed in a historical period where - how did they say the Mao? - the east wind imported it over the west wind, the Vietnamese were driving the Americans out, the French had been taken out of Algeria, today we live in a space that is not strictly ... Finally, the Berlin Wall fell, we live in a space that has absolutely nothing to do with the space of the time. So all that doesn't even make sense. I am working personally, I write, I try to write, I do not know if I will reach the end, to see what is the current trace of what can be identified as a trace of this period in the current world, but these are in any case traces that will never be pure, fortunately at the limit, because at the time we had a great refusal of what we called recovery, and well society has recovered '

RG: But it will be difficult to commemorate '68 next year, it was never commemorated like the revolution or like other events

AG: Anyway we would have made people laugh in '68 if we had them talked about commemoration (RG laughs)

RG: No, but everything is commemorated today

AG: We live in a commemoration society

RG: No, but it catches up with you, for example will the town hall of Paris do something about it? next year ?

AG: I don't think so, and then I would sound ridiculous (RG laughs). We did not take the town hall in '68, it was not the Paris Commune, '68

RG: No, but I'm saying that since the people who run Paris may be more or less in agreement with certain elements of '68 and since the media will be talking a lot about May '68

AG: No, no, I don't think so. that the city is embarking on a commemoration operation, nor the police headquarters (RG laughs)

RG: Okay, thank you, we have worked very well

AG: I don't know ...