

RG: Good madam, I will start by asking you, please, your name and date and place of birth, and then that of Bernard Lambert

MP L: So, me, it's Marie-Paule Cassagne. I was born on July 18, 1934 in Garravet. It is in the Gers

RG: And the same for Bernard Lambert

MP L: For Bernard, Bernard was born on September 11, 1931 in Teillé, Loire-Atlantique

RG: Near Ancenis?

MP L: Yes, there you go

RG: And maybe we can start by knowing where you met

MP L: We met in Paris, within the framework of the Jeunesses Agricoles Catholiques. JAC, JACF, in Paris

RG: Because at that time it was?

MP L: He was on the national team. He was in charge of the senior teams, if memory serves. And I had been, I had just arrived in Paris, where I was asked to follow the problems, first of all professional, in relation to the daughters of farmers. Then, I was then transferred to the press organ for young girls, which was Promise

RG: So what year are we here?

MP L: It was 1957. February 1957, when I arrived in Paris and saw Bernard for the first time

RG: So, to go back, can you tell me a little bit about your family?

MP L: So my family was a family of small farmers. An average farm of around thirty hectares, on the slopes of the Gers. That is to say fairly steep slopes, clayey soils which were often subject, when there was a lot of water, to landslides. So we had a terrain that was hilly and quite - sometimes - difficult in terms of culture. But exploitation in this region was often the work of peasant owners and smallholders who made mixed farming. That is to say, we had livestock, we had cereals, we had poultry. And there was a market in the region, which was the Samatan market, which was a market that remained, moreover, despite the disappearance of the markets of generally in France, which has always remained a very flourishing market. Who was the market for farm products in turkeys, chickens, and especially foie gras

RG: The Saint-Martin market?

MP L: Samatan.

RG: And then, so, your father was the owner?

MP L: Yes. Owner-operator. With problems. We are not going to go into those kinds of details, but what normally happened was the inheritance of the parents with co-habitation at the family level. And that posed a number of problems in my family. My grandmother had a somewhat difficult character, which my mother couldn't stand. So who made them go. And that they came back. But they found themselves all alone to operate a thirty-hectare farm, when usually there were still the grandparents who gave a hand, whether it was to help the children, whether it was for work, , and other. So a rather difficult time in terms of financial balance and work-family balance

RG: And for the children ... Because you have how many brothers and sisters?

MP L: There were four of us

RG: So that was a problem for the succession, or for the inheritance?

MP L: No

RG: Because there was no division, it was a cohabitation, right?

MP L: It was the cohabitation with the parents and there was one of the children who remained. Here. One of the children made up his mind or was chosen, it was depending. And there is one that was left and the others were leaving

RG: Is that why you went to Paris?

MP L: Yes, of course (laughs from MP L)!

RG: And I read somewhere that Bernard Lambert's father was more of a sharecropper, right?

MP L: He was a sharecropper on a farm in the castle which was just five hundred meters away

RG: Was it the castle of the Marquis de La Ferronnays?

MP L: No. It was the Marquis ... I don't know if he was a Marquis anyway. No, it was a big family that was therefore, some of whom were doctors in Nantes. It was the De Bureau (?). Ah yes, maybe two desks, it was one of De Bureau, I don't know. I can't tell you exactly

RG: And you did, as a study?

MP L: Me, I did two years of complementary courses at the time, which should bring it down to a level of ... It was in the

RG: Up to fifteen years or so?

MP L: Fourteen, fifteen, yes, that's it. That is to say to obtain a BEPC. But I haven't been that far. It was a religious pension. Whereas I had been to the school of the commune, which was mixed, on the one hand, and then it was not religious, it was a secular school. So the adaptation was very rough. And I gave up after two years

RG: Adaptation in a secular environment? Or in the school?

MP L: No, the reverse (laughs from MP L)!

RG: Because I didn't follow ...

MP L: I was in a public municipal school. And I was an intern, because there was no other solution, I was a boarder in a school for nuns

RG: In which city?

MP L: Samatan

RG: So you didn't ... Because you were separated from your family?

MP L: Yes, without a doubt. It was hard. We came home every three months ...

RG: Really?

MP L: Well yes! There were twelve kilometers

RG: But twelve kilometers is not a hundred kilometers. But at the time ...

MP L: No, but we did it by bike sir (laughs from MP L and RG)! But I was able to cycle seventeen kilometers, but everyday it was a bit much

RG: But you weren't allowed to come home every weekend, every fortnight?

MP L: No, no. It was for the holidays. Point. I think the coffee is over ...

RG: Okay, I'll take that away from you quickly. Great, thank you

MP L: You can take the time to drink it

RG: No, no

MP L: We're gone, we're not stopping anymore!

RG: No, I can do two things at the same time! Either way, it's mostly you who are speaking. So, Bernard Lambert had rather a religious education?

MP L: Yes. Mostly. More than me. Since at the time in Loire-Atlantique the majority of schools were religious schools. Who in any case depended on sisters, brothers, etc. And the municipal school, there were between ten and twenty students. While there were three hundred at the private school. So everyone went to private school. He was afterwards, for two years, I believe it was in Ancenis ... I no longer know what the order is, whether he was first in Nantes or

RG: I noted: Collège Saint-Joseph

MP L: Yes, Saint-Joseph

RG: In Ancenis

MP L: Yes. And after stopping for two years for illness. Since he had tuberculosis

RG: For two years! What year was it? Was it during the war, until the end of the war?

MP L: Yes, it was during the war. During two years. There I don't know exactly

RG: And then he studied in Nantes?

MP L: He left for Nantes afterwards. And he stopped. Because he had been to Saint-Joseph, and then to Nantes afterwards, supported by the parish priest, because he wanted to be a missionary. And having suddenly discovered that really his vocation was not that at all, they stopped studying in April, in the middle of the year.

RG: It was the priests who wanted him to be a missionary or was it Bernard Lambert who wanted?

MP L: A missionary had passed, who had spoken of Africa, or whatever, and he had been enthusiastic, wasn't he?

RG: So he left school around '46, right?

MP L: Yes, I think so. '45 or '46, I don't know exactly

RG: And then he took over his father's farm?

MP L: Yes, with his brother. And that was ... It must have started again in '51, if I remember correctly. '51, '52

RG: Me, I have '52. But it could be '51

MP L: Yes, it's in those areas. I could find him if I looked at the ... I must have a lease that had been made. It's possible, we can watch it after

RG: So he was no longer a sharecropper, he was more of a farmer then, right?

MP L: So when they took over ... My stepfather was a sharecropper. But when they took over with his brother, they demanded to have a lease. Since the tenancy laws were passed not too long ago

RG: And so their farm was a farm ...

MP L: Thirty-seven hectares. Who was above all ... That is to say that they, above all, converted it into dairy production. Before, it was mixed farming and breeding a little bit. Rather

RG: And then, for both of them, the passage through the JAC and the JACF was very important, right?

MP L: They were Catholic Action movements, okay. But it was also I believe, very linked to all these movements that followed the war. And which were popular education movements, after all. Rural homes, at the level of the laity, Peoples and cultures. There were a lot of things in France in any case, to try to set in motion ... It was the movements of Popular Action, which we called

RG: Was it for education, for culture?

MP L: That's it, it was for education

RG: But was it also for the profession?

MP L: For leisure. It was for the profession and for the hobby, the two together



RG: But it was essentially in each village, there was something which was directed by the parish priest?

MP L: It was very variable depending on the region. When we were in Loire-Atlantique, it was not the priests who took care of the young people, it was often the vicars. Often in opposition to the parish priest, moreover. Because the Catholic Action groups competed with the Children of Mary groups, and others

RG: Because the Children of Mary groups were?

MP L: It was very within the framework of the Church

RG: Traditional?

MP L: Yes, very traditional. Spiritual first, isn't it

RG: You were part of the Children of Mary?

MP L: Not at all (laughs from MP L and RG)! Do I have something to do with the Children of Mary?

RG: I don't know, I don't know what they look like! No, but it's just to ...

MP L: To inform you

RG: To see the conflict that there was between two possible ways

MP L: No, but it was very traditional. The others were much more in the involvement of young people, in work, in leisure, etc.

RG: Bernard Lambert left for Algeria before getting to know you?

MP L: Yes. Just before. He was returning from Algeria the first time I met him

RG: And he had had a pretty hard experience in Algeria?

MP L: Quite hard. Because he had been one of the recalled. And they had refused to return to their camp as requested. So they delayed the trains, they did a lot of demonstrations like that. So he was in Algeria then in disciplinary regiments, and therefore faced with rather harsh things.

RG: That is to say?

MP L: Well, that is to say, an army that wants to break guys, that's what it can give! That is, steps, things like that. He was there for a few months, I don't know exactly how long. But he was repatriated after an amoebic dysentery that had put him in shambles, downright

RG: His health was not very good, was it?

MP L: Yes. He was in good health, but he couldn't resist this kind of thing. I believe there were conflicts. There were as many problems of harshness as to what was asked of them, as there were conflicts over the army itself and what they were called upon to do. He went to retrieve a mule, which earned him the military cross. Otherwise I think that otherwise he would have been in jail

RG: And then he came back to Paris or to his family?

MP L: He returned to Paris and to his family. He did both at the same time, if you will. That is to say that when he was at the JAC, he had a permanence in Paris but he came back, since he was an operator at the same time, to help when there was major works.

RG: And was it still the JAC?

MP L: It was in '56, I think it was in '56, that he must have been at the National Center for Young Farmers, deputy general secretary

RG: Because this National Center for Young Farmers was a kind of section of the FNSEA? How did that happen ?

MP L: There was at the time - can I give you that with precision, it's not sure, I will try - there were the Circles of Youth. Which were, within the framework of the profession, groups of young people, who were interested at the professional level in what was being done. Which were somewhat sponsored by the FNSEA. Which was also more or less linked to the Rural Homes. Anyway, it was pretty vague all this stuff. And Michel Debatisse among others, with a group of the JAC, developed the possibility for young people to have the National Center of Young Farmers - or Circle, I don't know what it was - but with the possibility of having representatives direct within the FNSEA

RG: So it was new at the time?

MP L: It was completely new

RG: And it was around '56, '57?

MP L: '56, '57. I can find it, but that's it

RG: So that's when you got to know him?

MP L: Yes, in '57

RG: And how was it in Paris? As national manager, you were in housing ...

MP L: There were two different places. A place for boys, a place for girls, of course. We don't mix everything up (laughs from MP L and RG)! There were two large apartments in which had been arranged rooms. There were two of us per room. With bed and desk. And we worked, depending on the responsibilities we had, with team meetings. And there were joint JAC-JACF meetings at the training level, among others. There were training days every month I think

RG: And where was it in Paris?

MP L: Ah, things were moving. It was according to the ... There were religious committees welcoming groups. And it was often done in things like that. In centers where we were accommodated for two or three days

RG: And then, so it's from that point on. Did you leave with him? What year did you get married?

MP L: We got married in 1959. In January '59. Because he was elected parliamentarian, deputy, in December 1958

RG: Can you explain that to me a bit? It was news ...

MP L: Ah, that was not planned. No

RG: How did it go?

MP L: It happened, so ... Elections ... It was De Gaulle who dissolved the National Assembly. And therefore re-election in November. And there was in the region of Châteaubriant André Morice, a former Socialist Radical, who presented himself. And all the young people of the time and a good part even of the right did not want it

RG: Because of the Algerian war?

MP L: Because of his radical secular positions. And above all, he had ... what had he done this guy, I don't know anymore

RG: Well, he wasn't very popular

MP L: It was not very popular. Having all the same notoriety. Since he was ... Was he already elected MP for the region

RG: Was he mayor of Nantes?

MP L: He was the mayor of Nantes! Effectively. You have all the information! It's a bit far for me. And then, since I was not from the region, I landed there

RG: So how is it that Bernard ran for office?

MP L: So people didn't want it. Bernard was someone who had already had a significant impact on union meetings. He had intervened in several meetings and he knew how to thrill the crowds. So the locals said to him: 'But you should go to Châteaubriant against André Morice'. He said, 'You're not okay? I don't want to introduce myself. And they came to push him to his house, telling him, they came in numbers. And he said, 'I don't mind, but as long as you are the one organizing the whole campaign, I won't take care of it. You must be, if I go, you commit to preparing the whole campaign and to doing it with me. ' And so, that's what happened. And that's why

RG: And it was mostly people from the JAC?

MP L: They were people from the JAC, they were people from the Agricultural Union; it was people who were ... yes, it was all that what

RG: So he was elected MRP deputy?

MP L: MRP related deputy the first time

RG: That is to say more or less independent but in the movement?

MP L: Yes, there you go. It was not very hot to hang on to the MRP wagon. But when he was elected - at first, he didn't think he was elected (laughs from MP L). Then, when he was elected, he had to organize himself around that. That is to say, he realized that in the National Assembly we could not do much if we were not attached to a group. So he attached himself to the MRP. But he was somewhat disowned by his group when he took, in particular, a position on Algeria. He was not supported by the group

RG: Because he had had a pretty point of view. ?

MP L: He had spoken of self-determination on Algeria. He had worked on his speech with a journalist from L'Express called Barrat, Robert Barrat

RG: How do you spell Barrat?

MP L: BARRAT

RG: Wasn't his speech spontaneous?

MP L: Well, in the National Assembly, it was not possible! He had to be prepared. And besides, he was very anxious to speak in front of this platform. It was no longer a rally in front of a crowd. It was something else

RG: And he was scolded by elders of French Algeria?

MP L: He stopped his speech because Le Pen, Lagayette and a third, I don't know which one, came to the podium to try to kick him out of there

RG: Tommaso, was that the other one?

MP L: Yes, there you go

RG: And was it during a debate on Algeria?

MP L: Yes, it was a debate on Algeria

RG: And can you tell me something ... You say he knew how to thrill crowds. Did he know how to speak in public?

MP L: Yes

RG: There was something, what did he have as a personality to be able to thrill the crowds?

MP L: He was very, how to put it ... He spoke of concrete things and things that people could understand, at the level of a rural audience. At the level of the National Assembly, it is something else. The proof is that he got fired (laughs from MP L and RG)! He understood that it was not the same audience. Because he was from that environment. Because he had lived this story. And I had a rather moving letter at the time of his death, from a peasant who told me: 'Bernard was our word'. Because you have to put yourself in the shoes of this generation of peasants who did not have the right, finally, who did not feel the right to speak. We were in a situation, if you saw certain documents ... Bernard spoke of his father, who spoke of 'our master', etc. So there was a domination, both of the Church and of the aristocracy, in the rural environment, which was very important in Loire-Atlantique. Much more important than here. I could make the comparison between the two and this kind of submission of the peasants ... Because they did not have much choice. How they were doing if they weren't a bit in the ... They got kicked out of the landlord, there was no law protecting them, until the years when there was renting. I think that was the reason for this kind of feeling of inferiority and not being able to express yourself. So they felt that Bernard was their word Much more important than here. I could make the comparison between the two and this kind of submission of the peasants ... Because they did not have much choice. How they were doing if they weren't a bit in the ... They got kicked out of the landlord, there was no law protecting them, until the years when there was renting. I think that was the reason for this kind of feeling of inferiority and not being able to express yourself. So they felt that Bernard was their word Much more important than here. I could make the comparison between the two and this kind of submission of the peasants ... Because they did not have much choice. How they were doing if they weren't a bit in the ... They got kicked out of the landlord, there was no law protecting them, until the years when there was renting. I think that was the reason for this kind of feeling of inferiority and not being able to express yourself. So they felt that Bernard was their word They were fired from the owner, there was no law that protected them, until the years when there was renting. I think that was the reason for this kind of feeling of inferiority and not being able to express yourself. So they felt that Bernard was their word They were fired from the owner, there was no law that protected them, until the years when there was renting. I think that was the reason for this kind of feeling of inferiority and not being able to express yourself. So they felt that Bernard was their word



RG: But was it a natural tone, or did he have a bit of a fiery personality?

MP L: Ah yes, fiery, surely (laughs from MP L)!

RG: And then, he did readings?

MP L: The two years he was sick, so he was in bed, at home, for two years. The owners had a library. And the owner's daughter was bringing him books. And that's how he read, I don't know - he told me, I don't remember - he had a literature that happened to him like that

RG: But after this speech to the National Assembly, you say, he was fired by his party?

MP L: No. He stayed. He was tolerated. But I know that there are several interventions which were more or less, he had difficulty re-situating himself in this group.

RG: And then he was beaten

MP L: He was beaten in '62

RG: And during that time, you lived in Paris?

MP L: So the first year, we stayed in Paris. That is to say, he was always associated with his brother on the farm. And they had set up a room in the house for, well, we had two rooms. And my brother-in-law and my sister-in-law also had two rooms. So we were either in Paris or on the farm. It was one or the other. Depending on whether there were parliamentary sessions or not. Because there were parliamentary sessions, but there was also the whole relationship he wanted to establish with his constituents. That is to say, he had a secretariat.

To answer mail, on the one hand. And at the end of each parliamentary session, he wrote a bulletin that he sent to all voters. And during the winter, he resumed meetings afterwards for information. About one per canton. It was his concern to have a direct link with voters

RG: And why do you think he was beaten in '62?

MP L: Because his election was an accident (laughs from MP L and RG)! That all the right woke up, because they saw clearly that they did not have to do with a very classic catho. Catholic, okay, but they called him 'the red devil in the stoup'. There you go, it situates you all the same (laughs from MP L)!

RG: 'They', who are they? The classic cathos?

MP L: Political opponents

RG: So he came back to the area?

MP L: On the farm

RG: Was it still in Teillé?

MP L: Yes, still in Teillé. We haven't moved from Teillé

RG: And he joined the PSU?

MP L: He joined the PSU in '66, if I remember correctly

RG: Because we invited him, or did he think it was the party for him?

MP L: We participated, I had participated with him, moreover, in training sessions that took place in the summer. Which were made by Economy and Humanism. They were Dominicans. And it happened every summer. We were there three or four years in a row, at least. And I know that we had met people there who were at the UGS at the time. There were three or four small parties of this kind, which regrouped to make the PSU afterwards. And so it was a bit ... There was also that, organized on - but that Médard must have told you, and Guy also - there were, organized in Nantes, the weekends in which eighty to one hundred participated. people, easily, with all the religious who were at the forefront of the Church. Whether they are Dominicans, Jesuits or other ... There must have been Congar,

RG: Paul Blanquart?

MP L: Of course, Paul Blanquart, with whom we have kept very good relations. Who else?

RG: Jean Cardonnel?

MP L: Yes, it is possible. I don't know exactly, but Guy must have it all

RG: Economy and humanism, was it a small group?

MP L: They were Dominicans, and a review called Economics and Humanism. And who was in Caluire in the Rhône. Next to Lyon

RG: Where Jean Moulin was arrested. And so you two, did you hang out these weekends?

MP L: Yes

RG: What for?

MP L: Because we were thirsty for something else ... We were in a town where, when I arrived, in '59, ninety percent of the population went to church once a week, if it wasn't several. And at vespers, etc. With very classic things that made me scream at times. That is to say, we went to church, but we tapped people on the back for ... In terms of reputation, we did not accept sharing. Finally, it was really very closed things, and I put up with more

RG: The sharing of farms? Or sharing what?

MP L: We couldn't interact with people in a free way. It was always the 'what will we say?'

RG: Everyone in their corner

MP L: Yes, of course

RG: So you were looking for a different world?

MP L: We were looking for a different world. From a fairer world. From a world that would have allowed ... Because we were all the same, in the rural environment, it was the misery of the world ... Maybe not only there, because in the working class too. But the little peasants who were forced to leave their farm and ended up with ... I saw a young married man, who was to have one or two children, who was forced to leave his farm. He found a job in masonry. He was to earn nine hundred francs at the time. I no longer know what the minimum wage was at the time. I believe it is of that order. And he left fifty to pay off the debts he owed. So we met them every day like that. We were faced with all the problems that the peasants encountered in their professional life. It was still a period when people weren't particularly helped at that time.

RG: And to describe these situations and to explain all that, I read somewhere that Bernard Lambert discovered Marxism

MP L: Yes

RG: Finally, the class struggle. And I find that when he talks about Brittany and the problems of farmers, he often talks about colonization, as if Brittany were a country colonized by more advanced France. That's it ?

MP L: I don't know if it is exactly ... Well, what was crying out in our eyes: there was a region, which was the Paris Basin, which was very rich. Who made the law, at the level of the union as well as agricultural policy. And the problem of the breeders was not taken into account at all. And all of Brittany was nevertheless a region of breeding and dairy production above all. And all these regions, all the outlying regions, did not feel very taken into account in terms of all their interests.

RG: And then the peasants had to sell their milk to big milk companies?

MP L: Yes. Milk was sold either to dairy companies or to cooperatives

RG: But the cooperatives were managed by peasants, or not?

MP L: Were managed by peasants. Except that after a while, when they took a certain extension, that they had a certain importance, it was above all the technicians who regained power in there. Because a farmer who went to the board of directors, even if it was every week, he was not there to manage every day. He made the big decisions. But they were making big decisions after we had reported to them what was going on. To know what to take

RG: And was it also the moment of the John XXIII circle? Do you have a memory of Guy Goureaux's Cercle Jean XXIII?

MP L: Yes

RG: Were you in there?

MP L: Was it the same ... I don't know if it was the same as the meetings that were held, which I was telling you about earlier, once a year . Anyway, there was some communication between those two things, I think. But it was above all Bernard who was, as an active member. For two reasons. Because I was ready to work on this ground. But the problem is that we had four children, a farm, and that when there was one who was taken for responsibilities, the other tried to fill in from behind (Laughs from MP L RG)

RG: So can we come to '68? Because there were a lot of demonstrations, speeches. What are your memories of '68 in Loire-Atlantique?

MP L: First, the memory that it was something that didn't fall from the sky like that. It is because for a long time there had been meetings between workers and peasants. That there had even been, I believe it was on May 8, a meeting, a demonstration, a big demonstration in Nantes, which brought together workers, peasants and students, before Paris. So people have been working on this rapprochement for a long time, for some time now, on the one hand. And on the other hand, that was at the level of farmers' unions, but ... I was at the time in the office of the Departmental Center for Young Farmers. And I was in charge, like women usually, that is to say problems that the boys did not want to deal with: the press, education, social issues. So we had prepared a work, moreover with Guy Goureaux, on teaching. At the time, it was the period when the problems of school card were decided. And we had defended the idea that there should not be a multitude of training institutes like the ones that exist. In other words, one could find in a canton in Loire-Atlantique at the time a boy's CEG, a free girls CEG, a boy CEG, a lay girls CEG, plus a family home and possibly something else. So we felt that it was not with such dispersal that we could have a quality offer in the education of young peasants. So we had information meetings in the winter of '67 -'68, October, November. We had to hold five or six information meetings in Loire-Atlantique with Guy Goureaux to explain what were the stakes of this school map. What seemed important to us: to overcome the free school-public school problems in order to have institutes which are valid and which bring everyone together. This theory has been quite advanced. Since at the practical level, we arrived, I

think it was in '68 or '69, I know more, at an elementary school - there, it was on the CEG, it was different - which brought together with the public and private agreement. In La Rouxière to overcome the free school-public school problems in order to have institutes which are valid and which unite everyone. This theory has been quite advanced. Since at the practical level, we arrived, I think it was in '68 or '69, I know more, at an elementary school - there, it was on the CEG, it was different - which brought together with the public and private agreement. In La Rouxière to overcome the free school-public school problems in order to have institutes which are valid and which unite everyone. This theory has been quite advanced. Since at the practical level, we arrived, I think it was in '68 or '69, I know more, at an elementary school - there, it was on the CEG, it was different - which brought together with the public and private agreement. In La Rouxière

RG: Who is where?

MP L: In Loire-Atlantique. Where there was Bernard Thareau. You must have heard about it maybe

RG: So it was a bit of a flagship elementary school

MP L: Avant-garde, yes

RG: Model?

MP L: Yes, but Catholic education refused completely

RG: I was going to ask

MP L: Oh no, no. They completely ...

RG: Because you threatened free education like that?

MP L: Absolutely. And they held counter-meetings everywhere, moreover, to say the opposite (Laughs from MP L)! But there they could not prevent. But they stuck there. It remained an embryo, an experience that remained without result

RG: But was it at the elementary level, or college?

MP L: We, in terms of the information meetings we had, we had at the college level. But in La Rouxière, they had done it at the elementary level

RG: But to explain the solidarity between workers, peasants and students, were the students not rather in another world? Well, they were rather bourgeois, right? Or were there sons and daughters of peasants returning to college?

MP L: There were probably a few, but very few at the time. Very very few. And I think what was done at the regional level at the time, what brought together ... But, as the students were in market elsewhere, they joined us.

RG: Because there was an inter-union, right? Who brought the unions together?

MP L: First, there were meetings between the workers 'and peasants' unions. By saying: we have common interests. They tried to pit us against each other by telling the peasants that the workers were lazy because they took time off all the time. To the workers that the peasants owned, that they had money etc. However, we realize that both are in trouble, and that, in our regions, if we do not do something together, we will be eliminated and that's it. I remember very well that the main themes of the time were: the arc of development went through Germany, the Rhone valley and all those regions. And that all the outlying regions, on our side, were far from communication and far from Paris, therefore difficult to access. And so, if we did nothing, we were left completely abandoned. Basically. Very big



RG: So there was this demonstration on May 8, where Bernard Lambert spoke?

MP L: Bernard Lambert has spoken. Gilbert Declercq, CFDT, spoke. Someone from teaching spoke, I believe, too

RG: A student?

MP L: I don't know if it was a student or a teacher

RG: Yvon Chotard?

MP L: Rather yes, maybe

RG: No, these are details that I can verify. But also, there were other demonstrations, on May 13, place of the Duchess Anne. And then there was the big demonstration on May 24, where the peasants arrived with their tractors. Do you remember that?

MP L: Yes. Of course

RG: How was it organized?

MP L: That of May 24, it was the unions who organized it. They had decided that there would be four steps, I believe. That is to be seen exactly. They came from many corners. They came from the region of Châteaubriant, Ancenis, etc., region Guérande, etc., region Machecoul and region of the vineyards, on the other side. That is to say there were several axes of convergence to come to Nantes with tractors

RG: And was it at a time when power was faltering? Do you have the impression?

MP L: Everyone was a bit buzzing. We could hear the news, etc., so it actually fueled the enthusiasm of the demonstrators.

RG: And then, therefore, there was this general strike. And that was the time when the peasants supplied the city, right?

MP L: In the meantime there had been strikes by workers, the closures of Donges and places where fuel was distributed. And so he set up a departmental committee, I don't know what it was called, to manage the distribution of fuel. So Médard must have given you some information

RG: It's the central strike committee, which was at the town hall, right?

MP L: There you go. At the town hall or elsewhere, I don't know. But he managed the fuel. And it had been agreed that ... Because the peasants, it was in the middle of May, there was work going on. The peasants who had livestock, there were tractors to feed. It was decided that there would be fuel that would be distributed to the peasants so that they could do their work. And that for their part, the peasants would distribute merchandise at cost price to the workers who were on strike. And there were distribution points. There was one in Nantes, at the entrance to Nantes. Finally, there were several distribution points

RG: And you, what were you doing at the time?

MP L: I looked after the children (laughs from MP L and RG) and I came for a demonstration! I participated when there were meetings at the departmental office. But hey, I couldn't be there every day, it wasn't possible. And I had a picture. Well, it was more after. Because when we started with poultry farming, there always had to be someone at home. So I said: we are like barometers. You know, the barometers, with a little good-man and a little good-wife, when one comes in, the other comes out! And I said: we're like that. When it's me who goes outside, it's Bernard who stays. When it's Bernard who goes outside, it's me who stays

RG: And do you have the impression that the farmers, the workers, have gained anything as a result of these demonstrations, these strikes? Or did it all fall apart?

MP L: Me, it's a personal feeling. My personal feeling is that well, there was a huge collapse the day there was the counter-demonstration of the Gaullists who rushed down the streets of Nantes. We said: ah! That was a bit of a hard blow. The gains are a voice, an awareness of people. There are things that moved from there

RG: What has changed?

MP L: More mentalities than material gains. The feeling that we could fight. It was, during the periods, the feeling that we could take, there was a freedom of speech. That we didn't have otherwise. There, it was quite extraordinary to meet with people who were not just peasants. It was this mix of workers and students that was good. Me, I set foot at university during this period for the first time. I had never been there otherwise, I didn't know where she was (laughs from MP L and RG)

RG: And what did you find?

MP L: Well, these debates ... It was a bit crazy, but it was all this excitement, these debates, it was quite fascinating. And quite strange for someone with no education

RG: But you felt close to these students, with their long hair, etc. ? They were still in the same fight?

MP L: They were in the same fight. So we had the feeling that they could also bring us something

RG: What, for example?

MP L: Students, or intellectuals. Compared to reflection. I believe that after '68 we wanted to be closer to this intellectual environment to know what it could bring us. With a certain suspicion, after. When there were waves of young people who arrived in the countryside and who came to teach us what to believe and practice, after a while ... (Laughs from MP L)

RG: Did you have maos at your place?

MP L: Yes. Finally, at home, in the department. They did the long walks, of course (MP L laughs)

RG: And you thought they were a little crazy? Or next to their pumps?

MP L: That they were exaggerating a little, but who perhaps had things that should not be rejected altogether

RG: What were they saying?

MP L: Or la la ... They were talking about everything. It was the relationships within the couple, the relationships, the fact of coming to work with the peasants or with the workers, we found that not bad, all the same. That there are people who are students but who also come to help out, it was something

RG: What were they saying about the relationship? They were all for free love, all that?

MP L: Yes, often, yes

RG: Did that shock you?

MP L: No, no. There were already quite a few things going around at the time. It didn't come like that. Le Nouvel Observateur had been writing articles on these issues for a while. We received Le Nouvel Observateur at home. So, well, it wasn't things that shocked us. It doesn't mean that we adhered fully, but hey, we were observers, let's say

RG: But you were still, you were no longer a traditional Catholic family? How would I say...

MP L: We were no longer traditional in the sense that the traditional families of Loire-Atlantique were and went to mass every Sunday, etc. We broke up - because we broke with the Catholic Church - but we broke it a little later, in the '72s

RG: Around when?

MP L: '72

RG: For what reason?

MP L: Because everything else had matured and we ended up finding that it was enough. They stuffed us the word with all their stories and then that's it

RG: So when you say break with the Church, does that mean that you no longer go to mass?

MP L: There you go. Our children were in public school. It was a big drama in the town

RG: Did we always talk about 'school without God'?

MP L: Yes, yes. But it was sure that it was something ... That is to say that we had already put our daughters in the school of the canton a little further. They had to take the bus, to go there. It hadn't caused any particular waves

RG: The canton's public school?

MP L: Yes

RG: Because you have daughters who were born in what year?

MP L: '60 and '61

RG: So elementary public school

MP L: Yes. It was in the middle course, I think, CM1, CM2. They must have gone there

RG: And you did it from a distance so as not to shock the locals?

MP L: Yes. Bernard was very scared. He was scared. For him, putting children in public school was to cut himself off from the population. Because he had experienced the differences that could exist between children in public and private schools. Those in the public school were completely cut off from the commune. Because the open school did theater, lots of activities, and the like, they weren't attached to that sort of thing. So, for him, it was cutting his children off from a social background. I was much more reserved. I was against their whole educational method, which gave me pimples

RG: Because you are from the South?

MP L: There you go (laughs from MP L and RG)!

RG: Here, it's a country ...

MP L: More secular

RG: More secular, more radical? This is the Radical's big field.

MP L: Yes, it's the Rad-coulters

RG: Dispatch from Toulouse, all that?

MP L: Yes. They also stayed ... But besides, they are not necessarily leftists for all that. You know, they're big conservatives, the Rad-Socs. But lay people

RG: That's the big difference. So, your children, what did they do for first communion?

MP L: The girls made their first communion. My boy was having a hard time accepting it. We ended up making him accept. We were still in there, not completely cut off, so it was difficult. And the youngest, who we wanted not to do, he wanted to do it (laughs from MP L)!

RG: So he did it anyway?

MP L: He did it anyway, but he did it with his cousins, here, in the Gers. So we solved things

RG: You spoke of a rapprochement with intellectuals for a while. Are you talking about secular intellectuals, or priests, Dominicans, people like that?

MP L: No. It was first, indeed, the clerics, in the context of the meetings I told you about. Economy and humanism and all the rest. And afterwards, it was to try to see ... Bernard had contacts, from the PSU, with people like Henri Leclerc, like a journalist from Nouvel Obs, Mallet. I don't remember the first name, but it was Mallet his last name, MALLET

RG: Henri Mallet?

MP L: No

RG: But from the same family?

MP L: No. I do not think so. It was a guy who was at the Nouvel Observateur

RG: We can find that. And it was around this time that Bernard Lambert wrote a book?

MP L: He wrote a book in '71, '72

RG: Me, I'm '70

MP L: '70, yes!



RG: The peasants in the class struggle. And where did he get this idea, to make a book?

MP L: He had a heart attack in '69, I think. And he felt he could die. So he wanted to say: I have things to say, I must do it now

RG: And he made this book on his own, or with ...?

MP L: He started by making a first draft. For that, he retired to my parents for a month. And he then had this first draft read to friends, to each other. And he reworked this book several times

RG: And was it prefaced by Michel Rocard?

MP L: Yes

RG: Because it was still PSU time?

MP L: From the PSU, yes

RG: And is it a book that has had a big impact?

MP L: Yes. He also made it possible to ... He was the mobilizer. That is to say that around the book there were a lot of encounters and meetings that took place throughout France. And Bernard was going there, he was explaining, that's it

RG: Because it was also the time of the Peasants-workers?

MP L: It was a little later the Peasants-workers. But there was already a whole movement around the Agricultural Union of the West, both young and old, which was quite dissenting in relation to the national. Bernard was secretary general at the regional level, I believe, at that time. It has been several years

RG: From the FNSEA

MP L: FRSAO. Regional Federation of Western Farmers' Unions. And I think it's through this that there has already been a significant awareness. The youth center, the CRJAO, at that time, was very anti-establishment. And it is from this nucleus that the peasant-workers left

RG: Because it started in which year the Peasants-workers?

MP L: The Peasants-Workers, as a declared movement, it was ... I must have some things on this

RG: But in the early seventies

MP L: Yes

RG: And is it a movement that has come out of the unions in the West or is it a national movement?

MP L: It was more important in the West, since there was the whole of the CRJAO which had practically followed on this ground. But there were some in the North, there were some in the Drôme. There were some in several departments

RG: And Bernard Lambert became the leader of the Peasants-workers?

MP L: No. They didn't need him (laughs from MP L and RG)! We were also at a time when, after '68, the leaders were very contested. And he was, as a leader, he was kind of sidelined. All the more so since he had in the meantime become president of a poultry production cooperative called SICA de Challans. Collective agricultural company. Challans is a town in Vendée

RG: So he had something else to do?

MP L: It was disputed about this takeover of the cooperatives. As president. But have you seen the movie that was made about him?

RG: No, I haven't seen it yet

MP L: Because all these things are told in there

RG: And then came the march on the Larzac?

MP L: In '73, the walk on the Larzac

RG: How did it go?

MP L: The peasants of Larzac, the one hundred and three peasants of Larzac, had planned, after having several protests and actions on Larzac, they made their march on Paris. '72

RG: With their tractors?

MP L: With their tractors. And the FNSEA did not support them, but accepted them. She accepted their approach until they were in Orleans. In Orleans, they decided it was over. The government had decided that they shouldn't come to Paris. Because there was still a support from people around this march. Because wherever they went, there were meetings, etc. So, when we arrived in Orléans, it was decided that it would end there. So the Larzac guys were completely disappointed. Bernard was there. He said: 'This is not possible'. So he knew, there was a migrant, who had not come, from Loire-Atlantique - one of his friends from Loire-Atlantique - who had settled not far from Orleans. He said, 'Look, we can't let this happen! Don't you have tractors? Can't you pick up tractors and then resume walking, since the others are stopped? '

RG: They were literally stuck?

MP L: They were blocked, yes. Well yes, when there are CRS, it's difficult to get tractors through. So the others have resumed, indeed. They started walking again with the tractors in the area. But they didn't get very far, did they? Another idea that has germinated in people's heads is to say: we're going to put a tractor on a truck, and we're going to bring it under the Eiffel Tower. And that's what they did. But then there were some pretty epic things

RG: There were sheep under the Eiffel Tower, I saw that

MP L: Yes, there were sheep too, but I don't know if it was the same time. There they had put a tractor

RG: Or it was at the Champs de Mars

MP L: They did a lot of things. Bernard said: 'Since we don't want to let the farmers of Larzac come to Paris, it is we who will go to Larzac'. He was the one who launched this idea a bit

against and against practically everyone. Finally, everyone, at least in the Peasants-Workers group, the guys said: 'Are you crazy, do you realize?'. He said: 'There will be twenty thousand people. They say: 'If we had twenty thousand people, it will be the end of the world!'. In the movie, it's explained by several of the guys. It's a bit of a challenge, saying: 'But it is crazy to get started'. And that's where there were a hundred thousand people. Between eighty and a hundred thousand people, I don't know, I didn't tell them because there were too many!

RG: And were you there?

MP L: Oh yes!

RG: What are your memories?

MP L: We have arrived ... It was the same, as I was telling you earlier. There were four successive marches. One who came from Brittany, the other from the East, the South and the South-West. And when we got to Millau, we went up, and when we got to the top, there was the strip of the whole road that goes up to the Larzac lit by cars. All these cars arriving, the immensity of this field which had been to welcome all this, the tents which were being set up ... It was wonderful!

RG: Was he in personal contact with certain peasants in Larzac?

MP L: Yes. Well, that's organized with them. This is organized with the peasants of Larzac. Otherwise, it would not have happened. At the time, was there already a Peasant-worker in the area? Finally, there were contacts, certainly, on this fight, yes

RG: And then was the Lip something that interested him?

MP L: Oh yes, of course. They brought together what we had already done in Loire-Atlantique. That is to say the workers-peasants alliance, which seemed to him something

important. It is also, you will see it in the film, it had besides had an image. He said: 'Today is the marriage of workers and peasants'

RG: Because he went to Besançon

MP L: He went to Besançon afterwards. But the Lip had come to the Larzac. Yes, the Lip were at Larzac

RG: Yes, of course. 'Lip, Larzac, same fight'

MP L: There you go

RG: So Bernard Lambert spoke on the Larzac. What did he say then?

MP L: Among other things (Laughs from and MP L RG). Because he said more than that. He said: 'The peasants will never again be Versailles'.

RG: Oh yes, that's it. And he still had the same ease ...

MP L: To have pictures, yes

RG: Yes, and to thrill the crowds

MP L: Yes, yes. Always

RG: And so, there was a march in Besançon, for the Lip. Was he there too?

MP L: Yes

RG: And you too?

MP L: No

RG: With the children

MP L: There you go (laughs from MP L and RG)!

RG: Or with the farm. And then it's far Besançon. So we are now in '75. Do you find that this period of turmoil subsided after, finally, '73, or did it continue?

MP L: The period of turmoil is enough, no doubt. But there are still some links that have remained. Above all, there is a different way of leading the struggles at the peasant level. That is to say occupation of ... At the level of integrated productions, among others. Because there were poultry productions, veal productions, pork productions which were under the integration regime. That is to say that it is firms which have peasants under contract, to whom they give - let us say, for us, it was the chicken for example - the animal, at the beginning, the food, the veterinary treatments (i.e. sanitary stuff). And who ultimately take the beast back to slaughter and condition it. So there was more and more of this type of contract that existed. Where the peasants were radically plucked. So there were a lot of struggles on that ground

RG: And you say, were there some occupations? What did they occupy?

MP L: Factories, directors' offices

RG: Where?

MP L: There are several. You will find this in Le Vent d'Ouest. There must be archives

RG: There was also the milk war

MP L: In '72, in Brittany. That too was another form of ... Before, we made demands, or we held demonstrations and to ask the State to increase the price of wheat. There, we addressed directly either to the company, yes, to the companies on which we were directly dependent.

RG: And that word 'peasant'? Because this movement is called the Peasant Movement. Has the word 'peasant' been a bit derogatory for a long time

MP L: Absolutely

RG: At some point it became?

MP L: A standard

RG: Finally, something honorable. And was it around that time?

MP L: I think that the Catholic Action movements, the youth movements, have helped to rehabilitate our condition as peasants. I remember, I joined - I don't know if I already told you - the Catholic Action movement. After the ... There was a rally in 1950 where there were a hundred thousand young people in Paris. And it had been discussed on the radio. And I



listened to the radio, and I found it extraordinary, that peasants could be talked about, could be in Paris, and have something to say. And thrill the crowds, so to speak

RG: 1950 already?

MP L: 1950. Yes, I think it's a hundred thousand young people in Paris

RG: Young farmers?

MP L: Yes, young farmers. Rural young people in any case, because the JAC was also aimed at ...

RG: So it was organized by the JAC?

MP L: Yes. And I think we were already starting to think that peasants could be people, not just rednecks. And I think that afterwards, little by little ... And after '68, I think that's where we most claimed the word 'peasant'

RG: And what was the career of Bernard Lambert, of you, at the end of the seventies, the beginning of the eighties? Were there any key moments or important movements?

MP L: Between '70 and '80

RG: Or is that calmed down a bit?

MP L: No. There have been a lot of actions taken at the level of land, at the level of integration, at the level ... It was always these struggles that we were criticized a little. It

was said that the Peasants-workers were far too aggressive. And what there was as an important moment, I would say, in relation to the movement, it is the eighties, with the questioning of calves with hormones. Who were denounced in '80. And the questioning, at the same time, of productivist agriculture as it was practiced. There was influence, was part of the Peasants-Workers movements at that time - well, it was no longer Peasants-Workers, but later - there were those who influenced this movement, it was the mountain farmers of the Languedoc-Roussillon region. Sometimes, there were in the pile of installed - what one called them those which had come to the countryside at that time? - neo-rural people. But there were also people from the mountains who had not been able to do productivist agriculture as it was practiced in the West. The West was the champion on this. Maybe that's why they were also more receptive to a number of things. These two movements joined afterwards. Because mountain farming was very poorly off. With intensive agriculture, they could not, it is not possible. Firstly. And with neo-rural people who have rethought things a bit. In Grenoble, there was a group from INRA which was also very involved in all this research. And I think that's all that made it happen

RG: But are the neo-rural dwellers settling down?

MP L: It's intellectuals, young students who came back to the countryside to breed goats, among other things (laughs from MP L)!

RG: And what is your opinion of them, in general?

MP L: Ah well, in general, those who stayed ... There are many who left

RG: Of course, because it's difficult

MP L: It's very difficult. They were often in situations that were not easy. Because access to land is not that easy. We don't let go like that (laughs from MP L)! And the others were also a renewal for these regions, often

RG: So Bernard Lambert died in '84?

MP L: Yes

RG: Accidentally?

MP L: Yes. Car accident

RG: Of course, it's a terrible loss. But if he was still there, what would have happened to him? He would be a Green, an alterglobalist, what do you think?

MP L: I can't interpret what he could have become, I don't know. I think he was still very aggressive. That he had already questioned productivist agriculture. He was very keen. He had called for a Peasant Confederation such as it exists. Someone like José Bové is exactly what he could be

RG: That was the question I had in my head. José Bové took over the torch from him

MP L: And I think he took it up, with his personality, but on bases that were completely compatible with that of Bernard.

RG: Have you met José Bové?

MP L: Yes, of course

RG: How is he?

MP L: He's very nice (laughs from MP L)!

RG: Yes, of course! Did you vote for him in the presidential elections?

MP L: Yes (laughs from MP L and RG)!

RG: Bernard Lambert was almost a legendary person?

MP L: Yes

RG: Did we shoot several films about him?

MP L: A movie. That's not bad !

RG: Who dates from when?

MP L: I think it's 2002. But I can give you right away, I have the references there, if you want

RG: And why do you think this movie was shot then?

MP L: Because its producer, Christian Rouault, wanted to make this film. He was originally from Loire-Atlantique. He knew Bernard Lambert, because he had been at the PSU with him. And at that point there was a production going on that was more of a two or three episode series on the peasants. It took place in Brittany. And he was trying to put his film in that frame. At the TV level. And finally he got ... France 3 was supposed to produce it, France 3 Bretagne. And finally he got France 2 to do it

RG: Did it appear on TV but also in cinemas?

MP L: Yes. It has been screened several times with debates

RG: Interesting debates?

MP L: Yes

RG: Did you participate?

MP L: Yes

RG: What did they say?

MP L: They asked questions raised by the film. That is to say, basically, I think what ... They must be spending one tonight in Toulouse, by the way.

RG: Too bad I'll be back in Paris ...

MP L: They're spending it tonight in Toulouse too. So with debate. What stood out a little, roughly, is that all that can happen, alter-globalization, the great questioning of productivism, these are things that were not born like that. It's a long road. And it starts from all these actions that were carried out at that time. It's a bit like that

RG: One last question. What are your memories today of this turbulent period?

MP L: From May '68

RG: Yes, but also from the seventies

MP L: My personal memories?

RG: In other words, in general, do you think it was an extraordinary moment in the history of France, in world history? Do you find that the world has changed a lot since '81, or so?

MP L: Yes. I think the world has changed anyway. Especially at the level ... So there are a lot of things that have remained stuck and there are a lot of things that have changed in terms of mentalities. That is to say, the man-woman relationship, the place of women in society. And I think that a lot remains to be done at the level of democratization, at the political level. Personally, I think society is changing in ways that are not always visible. Me, I was enormously surprised when, after the death of Bernard, I left, to earn my living. I left the operation, it was no longer a question of staying in there. And when I came back, it was the multitude of initiatives people took to solve their own problems that completely stunned me. In Loire-Atlantique, in '89, there was a census of initiatives and a forum of initiatives. Who had tried to shed light on all this work. And coming back here, in the South, we find the same thing. On the ground, the AMAPs, the farm markets, whatever is being done to try to bypass this kind of completely crushing magma of the capitalist economy. And which reappears everywhere at the level of a bunch of experiences that are being made. And I find these things very interesting. And that we went from a society that was hierarchical the AMAPs, the farm markets, whatever is done to try to get around this kind of completely crushing magma of the capitalist economy. And which reappears everywhere at the level of a bunch of experiences that are being made. And I find these things very interesting. And that we went from a society that was hierarchical the AMAPs, the farm markets, whatever is done to try to get around this kind of completely crushing magma of the capitalist economy. And which reappears everywhere at the level of a bunch of experiences that are being made. And I find these things very interesting. And that we went from a society that was hierarchical

RG: Feudal, almost

MP L: Almost feudal, especially in Loire-Atlantique (Laughs RG and MP L). But even at the level of the whole of society, where everything was, it started ... We had campaigns for years that were decided in Paris and people applied them to the grassroots afterwards. This is a movement that no longer exists, or at least it no longer works. Even if we want to impose it. And I think that with that, we haven't found a way to federate all these things, which are close. People are able to find each other on ... Well, when there was Le Pen, everyone was in the street. When there are big things, all these people come together. But to get them started together, in a structured way, it doesn't work. We tried to do it in Loire-Atlantique. At that time, I intervened in Loire-Atlantique a little bit. And I had worked with this team which had made this forum initiatives. And we tried to see if there was no way to make these people work in a more structured way. It never worked

RG: To be more efficient?

MP L: There you go. But that's not how they work. It's an action that can be very short-lived, but that solves a problem, and we move on. And I think that's something very fundamental, change in society. I don't know what it will look like afterwards, I don't know how it can coordinate. I don't know what we can do ...

RG: So it's an associative life?

MP L: It's associative lives, it's a lot of things

RG: But also economic initiatives?

MP L: Yes, also

RG: Okay, I think we can stop there. Thank you very much for your testimony

MP L: I don't know what you can do with it, but hey ...

RG: A lot!