

## **May '68 Fifty-One Years Later**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The French workers' strikes of May 1968 reflected traditional working-class demands for less work and more pay. The student movement of the sixties confronted both left and right by advancing a cultural revolution of gender equality, expansion of personal freedoms, and eventually multiculturalism. During the long sixties, antiwork ideologies gained popularity and unprecedented public exposure by attempting to synthesize the New Left's desire for simultaneous personal and social liberation. Antiwork movements also provoked a powerful counterrevolution that endorsed labor and the work ethic. Nevertheless, in France, Spain, and other Western nations, much of the sixties' cultural revolution has survived, even if challenged.

### **KEYWORDS**

antiwork, strikes, 1960s, France, Spain.

As the fiftieth anniversary of May 1968 approached, commentators and historians of the events of that year continued to see it as a “revolution” and “rupture” (*brèche*).<sup>1</sup> Both rightist and leftist analysts persistently posed interpretations that emphasized discontinuity and asserted that the student and worker movements which forged the French 68 broke with the past. The students innovatively synthesized desires for simultaneous personal and social liberation. Without their revolts in the spring of 1968, workers’ strikes might have remained as isolated and localized as they were prior to the national work stoppages of May and June. By challenging the state and, at the same time, inciting its constrained but spectacular brutality, students triggered the greatest strike wave in French history.<sup>2</sup>

The stoppages involved seven million workers, and the major trade unions—the CGT (Confédération générale du travail) and the CFTD (Confédération française démocratique du travail)—articulated their traditional demands of more pay and less work, including retirement at 60 or

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<sup>1</sup> Julian Jackson, Anna-Louise Milne, and James S. Williams, eds. *May 68: Rethinking France’s Last Revolution*, (Basingstoke, 2011); Eric Zemmour, *Le suicide français*, (Paris, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Dogkyu Shin, “La CGT Berliet à Vénissieux en mai 1968: la réactivation de la mémoire locale et les enjeux de la contestation autour des conflits de 1967-1968,” in Xavier Vigna and Jean Vigreux, eds. *Mai-juin 1968: Huit semaines qui ébranlèrent la France*, (Dijon, 2010), 38-39; Louis Gruel, *La Rébellion de 1968: Une relecture sociologique*, (Rennes, 2004), 41.

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even 55. In line with the emphasis on rupture, some historians have assumed the revolutionary nature of this massive May-June strike wave and have resurrected the *gauchiste* (ultra-left) fantasy that the workers were “betrayed by the trade unions and the political parties.”<sup>1</sup> Yet workers’ control (*autogestion*), which was a major theme of the sixties throughout Europe and North America, remained largely absent from strikers’ demands.<sup>2</sup> In other

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<sup>1</sup> Nathalie Rachlin, “Falling on Deaf Ears, Again: Hervé Le Roux’s *Reprise* (1997),” in Jackson, *May 68*, 348.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Gerd-Rainer Horn, *The Spirit of ’68: Rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1956-1976*, (Oxford, 2007), 2; Richard Wolin, *The Wind from the East: French Intellectuals*,

words, although *autogestion* was popular for those searching for an alternative to managerial capitalism, it remained a slogan that sprang from the top down.<sup>3</sup> Many rank-and-file workers shared an ambivalent attitude towards salaried labor which they considered both wage slavery but also a part of their social identity. Thus, the workers were both producers and refusers of labor. Although union militants called upon wage earners to occupy their factories, relatively few did since part of their class identity involved escaping the workplace. As one worker-intellectual put it, “occuper une usine est beaucoup plus ennuyeux que d’y travailler” (“occupying a factory is much more boring than working there”).<sup>4</sup>

The 1960s democratized the expression of the refusal of labor which in previous centuries had been the monopoly of the old-regime nobility or bohemian intellectuals. During that remarkable decade, public questioning of work expanded from avant-garde groups, such as the Surrealists and Situationists, to a larger mass of students and workers. The movements of the 1960s may have been the first time that anti-work sloganeering attracted a large and public mass of followers, who included extreme leftists, hippies, and some workers.<sup>5</sup> In the late sixties the Italian workers repeated, “We want it all.” The refusal of work was radically antisocial and subversive,<sup>6</sup> reflecting a larger legitimacy crisis.<sup>7</sup>

Students created an inclusive movement which was joined by the *trimards*, *katangais*, *zonards*, *loulous*, the rough French equivalent to the lumpenproletariat or vagabonds.<sup>8</sup> These marginals were not adverse to drinking, getting high, and, of course, living without wage labor.<sup>9</sup> *Trimards* expressed radically and consistently the transient unconventional character and partying of student life, as reflected in the emancipatory hedonism in

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*the Cultural Revolution, and the Legacy of the 1960s*, (Princeton, 2010), 98, 139, 192, 214; Xavier Vigna and Jean Vigreux, “Conclusion,” in Vigna, *Mai-juin 1968*, 298; Rebecca Clifford, Juliane Fürst, Robert Gildea, James Mark, Piotr Oseka, and Chris Reynolds, “Spaces,” in Robert Gildea, James Mark, and Anette Warring, eds. *Europe’s 1968: Voices of Revolt*, (Oxford, 2013), 167.

<sup>3</sup> Frank Georgi, “Selbstverwaltung: Aufstieg und Niedergang einer politischen Utopie in Frankreich von den 1960er bis zu den 80er Jahren,” in Bernd Gehrke and Gerd-Rainer Horn, eds. *1968 und die Arbeiter: Studien zum « proletarischen Mai » in Europa*, (Hamburg, 2007), 260.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Mothé, “L’usine, l’amphi et l’association de quartier: fermeture de trois espaces militants en mai 1968,” *Esprit*, no. 344, (May, 2008), 37.

<sup>5</sup> Nanni Balestrini, *Queremos todo*, trans. Herman Mario Cueva (Buenos Aires, 1974); Jacques Guigou and Jacques Wajnsztein, *Mai 1968 et le Mai rampant Italien*, (Paris, 2008),

<sup>6</sup>; Serge Audier, *La pensée anti-68: Essai sur les origines d’une restauration intellectuelle*, (Paris, 2009), 11.

<sup>7</sup> Boris Gobille, *Mai 68*, (Paris, 2008), 6. These themes were elaborated in the journal *Révoltes Logiques* (1975-1981).

<sup>8</sup> Claire Auzias, *Trimards: ‘Pègre’ et mauvais garçons de Mai 68*, (Lyon, 2017), 32.

<sup>9</sup> Auzias, *Trimards*, 67, 154; Guigou, *Mai*, 25.

French university dormitories (*résidences*).<sup>10</sup> They also committed acts of iconoclasm and vandalism. *Gauchistes* politicized the practice of petty theft through the “vol révolutionnaire” (revolutionary theft) which helped to ruin the most important Parisian leftist bookstore, La Joie de Lire.<sup>11</sup> A variety of progressives, including radical Christian democrats, were not averse to erasing barriers and integrating *trimards* into the movement. “Il ne pouvait pas y avoir de Mai 68 sans trimards ni anars amateurs de cocktails” (“The May 68 movement could not exist without the lumpen or anarchists with [Molotov] cocktails”).<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the *trimards* provoked and, in the eyes of counterrevolutionaries, justified police intervention in numerous universities throughout France. Thus, they became major players in a national drama.

Whereas the early twentieth century saw the extension of an obsessive work ethic to new communist and fascist elites, the late twentieth century experienced the rise of anti-work ideology. Absenteeism, slowdowns, lateness, faked illness, turnover, sabotage, and theft continued during “les années 68.”<sup>13</sup> These revolts against work integrated various components of the working class. Militants and rank and file, women and men, French and foreign could all participate in the guerrilla war against wage labor. While avoiding workspace and worktime, wage earners used the same vocabulary that they had employed in the nineteenth century and labeled their enemies—whether scabs or cops—“lazy” (*fainéants*). The long sixties also marked a renewed interest in labor history, which for the first time began to chronicle these everyday refusals of work.<sup>14</sup> The cultural revolution of the period with its critique of labor provoked studies of beggars, vagabonds, “work-shy” and “anti-socials,” all of whom became more central to labor historiography.<sup>15</sup> A

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<sup>10</sup> Gruel, *La Rébellion*, 107, 117.

<sup>11</sup> Julien Hage, “Vie et mort d’une librairie militante: La Joie de Lire,” in Philippe Artières and Michelle Zancarini-Fournel, eds. *68: Une histoire collective*, (Paris, 2008), 536.

<sup>12</sup> Auzias, *Trimards*, 164.

<sup>13</sup> Xavier Vigna, *L’Insubordination ouvrière dans les années 68: Essai d’histoire politique des usines* (Rennes, 2007); Isabelle Sommier, *La violence politique et son deuil: L’après 68 en France et en Italie*, (Rennes, 1998), 13.

<sup>14</sup> Antoine Prost, *La CGT à l’époque du front populaire: 1934-1939: Essai de description numérique*, (Paris, 1964); Rolande Treppe, *Les mineurs de Carmaux, 1848-1914*, (Paris, 1971); Michelle Perrot, *Les ouvriers en grève: France 1871-1890* (Paris, 1974); Yves Lequin, *Les ouvriers de la région lyonnaise (1848-1914)*, (Lyon, 1977). For the concept of the long sixties, see Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c. 1958-1974*, (New York, 1998).

<sup>15</sup> Bronisław Geremek, *Les marginaux parisiens aux XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles*, (Paris, 1976). The original Polish version was published in 1971; Olwen H. Hufton, *The poor of eighteenth century France*, (Oxford, 1974). With few exceptions, German historians began to tackle the Nazi treatment of “work-shy” and “anti-socials” beginning in the 1980s. See Julia Hörath, „Asoziale“ und „Berufsverbrecher“ in den Konzentrationslagern 1933 bis 1938, (Göttingen, 2017), 25. See also Christa Schikorra, “Schwarze Winkel im KZ: Die Haftgruppe der ‘Asozialen’ in der Häftlingsgesellschaft,” in Dietmar Sedlaczek, Thomas Lutz, Ulrike Puvogel, Ingrid Thomkowiak, eds. „Minderwertig“ und „asozial“: Stationen der Verfolgung gesellschaftlicher Aussenseiter, (Zurich, 2005), 108. In societies where wage labor is

focus on resistance to wage labor helps link the French movement to others in Europe and around the world, even though the Gaullist government was much more effective in limiting refusals to labor than its Popular Front counterpart of the late 1930s and its contemporary Italian foil during the *maggio strisciante* of the late 1960s.<sup>16</sup>

The French work stoppages enabled the CGT and CFDT to win higher pay and fewer working hours, but these material gains resulting from the strikes should be placed in a larger context. The supposed revolutionary year 1968 was not exceptional and remained merely part of the general decline of the French work week which started near the beginning of the long sixties in 1962 (approximately 46 hours) and continued to the end of the century (generally 35-36 hours).<sup>17</sup> The stoppages of May-June revealed a solidarity between young and old and between students and workers which overcame the “generation gap” that many analysts presumed was characteristic of the sixties.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the antifascism inherited from the era of World War II continued to motivate both old and young European leftists. Leftist radicals defined fascism very broadly, and they condemned French President Charles de Gaulle, US President Lyndon Johnson, and the Generalísimo Francisco Franco. The children of Spanish anarchists were especially active in the major French provincial capitals—Lyon, Bordeaux, and, of course, Toulouse, the hub of Spanish Republicanism and antifascism in France. Like antifascism, venerable anti-imperialism was an important element of sixties’ politics. The post-World War II national independence struggles helped to trigger the *tiersmondisme* of the 1960s. Anti-imperialists supported Algerian decolonization and violently contested the US war in Vietnam.

Perhaps even more consequential than these political positions was the cultural revolution of those years. More than the year 1968 itself, the long sixties fostered dramatic changes that challenged both the left and the right. This “decade,” which began in the late 1950s and ended in the late 1970s, saw the emergence of gender equality, expansion of personal (including sexual) freedoms, multiculturalism, new aesthetic values, and a critique of work.<sup>19</sup> In France and other Western nations, including Spain, essential aspects of this

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unquestioned and even glorified, the unprecedented irrationality and brutality of the elimination of potential workers—especially Jews, Soviet POWs, Gypsies, and political prisoners—will raise more concern than the fate of “anti-socials.”

<sup>16</sup> Marcel van der Linden, *Transnational Labour History: Explorations*, (Aldershot, UK, 2003). Cf. Zancarini-Fournel, “L’épiceutre,” in Artières, 68, 248; Xavier Vigna, “La CGT et les grèves ouvrières en mai-juin 1968: une opératrice paradoxale de stabilisation,” in Vigna, *Mai-juin 1968*, 210.

<sup>17</sup> Philippe Askenazy, Catherine Bloch-London, and Muriel Roger, “La réduction du temps de travail: 1997-2003,” in Patrick Fridenson and Bénédicte Reynaud, eds. *La France et le temps de travail (1814-2004)*, (Paris, 2004), 186.

<sup>18</sup> Shin, “La CGT Berliet,” 38-40. For a new vision of youth culture, see Jean-Pierre Le Goff, *La France d’hier: Récit d’un monde adolescent. Des années 1950 à Mai 68*, (Paris, 2018).

<sup>19</sup> Marwick, *The Sixties*, 3-38.

cultural revolution have largely been accepted. Few question growing gender equality and the decriminalization of homosexuality, even if during the French May itself the dominant leftist ideologies, which were shaped by Marxism, had little place for homosexual or, for that matter, feminist militancy in their worldview.<sup>20</sup> The basic multiculturalist demand to prohibit racial and religious discrimination has achieved consensus.

In contrast, other elements of the sixties' cultural revolution have provoked a potent international reaction. The flight of the Vietnamese boat people, Cambodian genocide, and desperate migration to the West from Africa and the Middle East have discredited *tiersmondisme*.<sup>21</sup> Even if *tiersmondiste* and anti-racist, the May movements' emphasis on proletarian unity was implicitly hostile to multiculturalism.<sup>22</sup> The major French trade unions wanted to integrate immigrants into their ranks as workers, not as Spaniards, Portuguese, Arabs or Muslims. In fact, the latter resisted striking on behalf of French students or even workers.<sup>23</sup> Like feminism and gay rights, the failure of the working class to make revolution propelled multiculturalism, which has recently come under intense attack. Critics have noted that unrestrained multiculturalism encourages national selfcontempt and—ironically enough given the relativism of multiculturalism— a counter-productive disdain for European or North American civilization. Opponents of multiculturalism have also accused “*islamo-gauchistes*” (leftists uncritical of Islamism) of substituting a mythical progressive immigrant for a once-imagined revolutionary worker. What many observers see as the failure to integrate hundreds of thousands of Muslims into France and other Western nations has heightened anxieties about immigration. Some suggest a return to more rigorous and self-confident policies of assimilation that were successful with previous generations of European immigrants to France, including hundreds of thousands of Spanish Republicans. These suggestions have raised charges of “racism” and even “fascism,” but the advocates of more thorough assimilation and a more positive national identity have responded that unreflective “anti-racism” has replaced an exhausted “anti-fascism.”<sup>24</sup>

Cultural counterrevolutionaries have forcefully rejected the refusal of work and wage labor. The massive Champs-Élysées demonstration in Paris on 30 May 1968 in support of de Gaulle and his government called for an

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<sup>20</sup> Michael Sibalís, “And What Then about ‘Our’ Problem—Gay Liberation in the Occupied Sorbonne in May 1968,” in Jackson, *May 68*, 123, 130.

<sup>21</sup> Michelle Zancarini-Fournel, “Récit: Le champ des possibles,” in Artières, *68*, 43.

<sup>22</sup> Xavier Vigna and Jean Vigreux, “Introduction,” in Vigna, *Mai-juin 1968*, 6; Daniel A. Gordon, *Immigrants and Intellectuals: May '68 and the Rise of Anti-Racism in France*, (Pontypool, UK, 2012), 192.

<sup>23</sup> Mothé, “L’usine,” 36.

<sup>24</sup> Audier, *La pensée anti-68*, 337.

immediate return to work in the factory and classroom. During their nearly simultaneous marches, provincial imitators seconded this demand for a return to order and discipline.<sup>25</sup> Peasants who resented wage laborers' refusal to work expressed similar sentiments.<sup>26</sup> This pro-work restorationist current brought together the entire right and encouraged the government to issue an amnesty to the leaders of the failed and subversive *Algérie française* movement. At the end of May 1968, the right's coalition expanded as rapidly as had the left's at the beginning of the month. The threat and reality of revolutionary versus counterrevolutionary violence was elevated and sometimes real, but both sides generally restrained their most murderous and destructive tendencies.<sup>27</sup> This restraint confirmed the difficulty of making a "proletarian" or "working-class" revolution in advanced capitalist nations.

From the mid-1970s onward, the growing scarcity of wage labor limited job turnover and discouraged labor indiscipline. Increasing unemployment undermined the popularity of anti-work theorists and movements while boosting counterrevolutionary forces, including a xenophobic, if not racist, extreme right. The latter made increasing political gains in opposition to uncontrolled non-European immigration as well as uncritical multiculturalism. May's hedonistic slogan that complained of an everyday life of "métro, boulot, dodo" ("subway, work, and sleep") was a product of an era of full employment, and it disappeared in the face of more demands for all three.<sup>29</sup> The counter-offensive against the refusal of work continued well into the 1980s when the conservative neo-liberals, President Ronald Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, laid the basis for what some claim to be "illiberal" workfare that compelled the unemployed to labor.<sup>30</sup>

In France during the 2007 presidential campaign, Nicolas Sarkozy repeated this frontal attack from above on the sixties' legacy when he blamed the "relativism" that he attributed to May 1968 for France's alleged moral, intellectual, and economic decline. Sarkozy's solution was to glorify work and workers and to defend, at least rhetorically, those who "se lève tôt" ("wake up early for work"). Like Sarkozy, others have exaggerated the importance of May as the starting point (*événement fondateur*) for individualism, hedonism,

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<sup>25</sup> Philippe Péchoux, "'Pas de Nanterre à Dijon' Construction de contradictions du mouvement étudiant dijonnais de mai-juin 1968: entre réforme, révolution et réaction," in Vigna, *Mai-juin 1968*, 179-183; Lilian Mathieu, "Décalages et alignements des dynamiques contestataires: mai-juin 1968 à Lyon," in Vigna, *Mai-juin 1968*, 63.

<sup>26</sup> Vincent Porhel, "Plozévet 68: la révolte au village?" in Vigna, *Mai-juin 1968*, 123.

<sup>27</sup> Charles Diaz, *Mémoires de Police dans la tourmente de Mai 68*, (Paris, 2017), 96. <sup>29</sup> Mothé, "L'usine" *Esprit*, 43; Alastair Hemmens, *The Critique of Work in Modern French Thought: From Charles Fourier to Guy Debord*, (Cham, Switzerland, 2019), 169. <sup>30</sup> On this issue, see Desmond King, *In the Name of Liberalism: Illiberal Social Policy in the USA and Britain*, (Oxford, 1999).

consumerism, cosmopolitanism, feminism, and gay liberation.<sup>28</sup> Marxists too have blamed May for individualism and hedonism, but, unlike conservatives, they have attributed these “capitalist” values to the failure of the 1968 collectivist workers’ revolution.<sup>29</sup> Conservative French intellectuals worry that unrestrained individualism subverts traditional France, while leftists accuse “capitalist” egotism of negating the solidarity needed for a progressive future.

May’s critique of work planted the seed of anti-productivism, which would bloom after 1968. Attacks on the consumer society morphed into ecology that criticized the ravages of progress and production. Hedonistic consumerism, which was said to derive from the sixties, has continued but has been challenged by new ecological concerns. In the 1970s, radical peasant movements began to pose questions about industrial agriculture and its effects on the earth and on the human body.<sup>30</sup> The decade-long fight from 1971 to 1981 to prevent the French military from occupying the plateau of Larzac gained local and national support and was able to conserve the plateau as a grazing area for sheep used to produce the typically French Roquefort cheese. Rural protests against the state and capitalist innovations, such as genetically altered crops and fast food (*la malbouffe*), were justified by ecological concerns rather than class struggle. Even among the extreme left, such as the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste, the negative slogan of “anticapitalism” has often replaced the celebration of socialism or communism.

The Spanish sixties had much in common with that of its French neighbor. From 1956 student movements—eventually dominated, as in much of Western Europe, by various forms of Marxism—protested against the regime and were often seconded by progressive elements of a Catholic Church having its own sixties’ transformation. As during de Gaulle’s Fifth Republic, the late Franco years also experienced enormous and intense cultural and social changes that laid the basis for a delayed, scattered, but nonetheless profound sixties.<sup>31</sup> During this “second Francoism,” approximately 1956-1975, the regime promoted unprecedented economic growth, swelled urban environments, and escalated foreign exchanges. The result was the rapid development of secularization, cultural pluralism, and youth culture. The decline of illiteracy, softening of censorship, and increase of mass

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<sup>28</sup> This was a major argument in the bestseller, Zemmour, *Le suicide français*.

<sup>29</sup> Roland Holst, Willi Baer, and Karl-Heinz Dellwo, eds. *Paris Mai 68: Die Phantasie an die Macht*, (Hamburg, 2011), 165.

<sup>30</sup> Jean-Philippe Martin, *Des ‘mai 68’ dans les campagnes françaises? Les contestations paysannes dans les années 1968*, (Paris, 2017), 30, 66-69, 133, 193.

<sup>31</sup> See the contributions by Nigel Townson, Pablo Martín Aceña, Elena Martínez Ruiz, Tom Buchanan, Sasha Pack, Walter L. Bernecker, and Elisa Chuliá in Nigel Townson, ed., *Spain Transformed: The Late Franco Dictatorship, 1959-75*, (Basingstoke, UK, 2007). See also Walther L. Bernecker and Sören Brinkmann, *Kampf der Erinnerungen: Des Spanische Bürgerkrieg in Politik und Gesellschaft, 1936-2010*, (Nettersheim, 2011), 235-277.



consumption encouraged a Spanish cultural revolution which fostered the expansion of sexual and gender freedoms, multiculturalism (both regional and international), and increasing popularity of domestic and foreign rock/pop music. During the long sixties, which coincided with the long Transition to democracy, the vibrant creativity of Spanish art, literature, and cinema achieved international recognition.<sup>32</sup> A social and cultural Transition occurred before the much discussed political one.

After Franco's death in 1975 most Spaniards, including the military, became convinced that a Western European constitutional monarchy could continue the economic growth and social stability to which they were accustomed. A significant part of the *franquista* conservative base agreed, and a broad coalition of left and right terminated the regime. They were supported by the United States and European powers whose past concerns that the end of Francoism would mean instability in the Iberian Peninsula no longer dominated their policy-making. Only when the prospect of revolution had disappeared would the Western powers unreservedly support the Spanish transition to democracy. Despite strike waves, increasing dissidence, and regional tensions, the new democracy managed to survive and even prosper.

Modernization continued to dissolve traditional cultural constraints.<sup>33</sup> The permissive trends culminated in the *movida madrileña* which, even though often described as “countercultural” or “alternative,” quickly entered mainstream Spanish and international culture. In fact, local governments (*ayuntamientos*) often financed, at least partially, magazines, concerts, radio stations, and exhibitions.<sup>34</sup> El Viejo Profesor—Enrique Tierno Galván, Madrid mayor (1979-1986)—willingly aided the young muses of the capital. The particular nocturnal context of the *movida* reflected a renewed sixties' atmosphere of drugs, alcohol, gender fluidity, while encouraging individual creativity in the visual arts and music. The night discouraged both diurnal labor and conventional left or right politics while fostering the playful, but sometimes lethal, experimentation of youth from a mixture of social classes.<sup>35</sup> *La movida madrileña* was an implicit urban cultural critique of Franco's more rural *Movimiento Nacional*.

Coinciding with *la movida* in the late 1970s and 1980s, restrictions on contraception, divorce, and abortion were loosened. The deferred Spanish

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<sup>32</sup> Jeremy Treglown, *Franco's Crypt: Spanish Culture and Memory since 1936*, (New York, 2013).

<sup>33</sup> Reiner Tosstorff, “Spanien: 1968 und die Arbeiter—eine andere Bewegung,” in Gehrke, *1968*, 291-295.

<sup>34</sup> Maite Usó de la Fuente, *Urban Space, Identity and Postmodernity in 1980s Spain: Rethinking the Movida*, (Cambridge, UK, 2015), 62; José Manuel Lechado, *La Movida y no solo madrileña*, (Madrid, 2013), 122.

<sup>35</sup> José Luis Gallero, *Sólo se vive una vez: esplendor y ruina de la movida madrileña*, (Madrid, 1991), 3-5.

sixties saw changes as dramatic as in any Western nation even if these occurred not during any single year nor even a single decade. The recurring dream of “Europeanization” of Spain was largely accomplished, although some of the more traditional and classically liberal Europeanizers were not entirely pleased with the results.<sup>36</sup> Like Sarkozy, former Prime Minister José María Aznar objected to the utopian “espíritu sesentayochista” (“sixties spirit”) and its slogan, “Seamos realistas, pidamos lo imposible” (“be a realist and ask for the impossible”).<sup>40</sup> Aznar attributed the breakdown of the family and the deterioration of public education to the consequences of “mayo de 1968.” Instead of *la movida*’s sex, drugs, and rock and roll, he and others called for the return of traditional values of work, sacrifice, and *patria*. Yet the cultural counterrevolution never succeeded in completely eliminating the conquests of the long sixties in Spain, Western Europe, and North America where gender equality, sexual freedoms, and even multiculturalism have largely been accepted, even if constantly challenged.

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<sup>36</sup> Thomas Mermall, “Culture and the essay in modern Spain,” in David T. Gies, *The Cambridge Companion Guide to Modern Spanish Culture* (New York, 1999), 172. <sup>40</sup> José María Aznar, *Cartas a un joven español* (Barcelona, 2007), 112-113.