



## May '68: contributions to the birth of the first university of technology in France<sup>1</sup>

Maio de 68: contribuições para nascer a primeira universidade de tecnologia na França

68 de mayo: contribuciones al nacimiento de la primera universidad tecnológica en Francia

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### Abstract

In May 1968, there were many demonstrations by students and workers throughout France and in several other countries. Paris was the epicenter of the movement which is known as May '68. The students claimed for better physical and didactic conditions at universities and for the expansion of the French university system. This study aimed to present the contributions of May '68 to the expansion of the university system in France, especially to the creation of the university of technology. This is a bibliographical study. The results show that the movement motivated the approval of the law no. 68-978, on November 12, 1968, which addressed the French Orientation Act of Higher Education, expanded the number of universities in the country, created a new map for universities, and divided the University of Paris in 13 units, from 1971. May 1968 was also an additional reason to create the first university of technology of France, the University of Technology of Compiègne, in 1972. It was found that May '68 was the concrete opportunity that was lacking for the realization of long reflections in France for it to reshape the structure of its universities, which derived from the era of Napoleon Bonaparte.

**Keywords:** Social Movements. Social Movements and Education. Creation of university. May '68. University autonomy. Technology university.

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## Resumo

No mês de maio de 1968 ocorreram muitas manifestações de estudantes e de trabalhadores por toda a França e também em vários outros países. Paris foi o epicentro e o movimento ficou conhecido como Maio de 68. Entre as reivindicações dos estudantes estava o desejo por melhores condições físicas e didáticas das universidades e a ampliação do sistema universitário francês. O objetivo deste estudo é apresentar as contribuições do Maio de 68 para a ampliação do sistema universitário na França, sobretudo para a criação da universidade de tecnologia. O estudo é bibliográfico. Os resultados evidenciam que o movimento motivou a aprovação da Lei nº 68-978, de 12/11/1968, que trata da orientação do ensino superior francês, ampliou o número de universidade no país, criou um novo mapa para as universidades, promoveu a divisão da Universidade de Paris em 13 unidades, a partir de 1971. O Maio de 68 também foi um motivo a mais para criar a primeira universidade de tecnologia da França, a Universidade de Tecnologia de Compiègne, em 1972. Conclui-se que o Maio de 68 foi a oportunidade concreta que faltava para a efetivação de longas reflexões na França para remodelar a estrutura da universidade vinda desde a era de Napoleão Bonaparte.

**Palavras-chave:** Movimentos Sociais. Movimentos Sociais e Educação. Criação de universidade. Maio 68. Autonomia universitária. Universidade de tecnologia.

## Resumen

En mayo de 1968 hubo muchas manifestaciones de estudiantes y trabajadores en toda Francia y también en varios otros países. París fue el epicentro y el movimiento se hizo conocido como mayo de 68. Entre las afirmaciones de los estudiantes estaba el deseo de mejores condiciones físicas y didácticas en las universidades y la expansión del sistema universitario francés. El objetivo de este estudio es presentar las contribuciones de mayo de 68 a la expansión del sistema universitario en Francia, especialmente para la creación de la universidad de tecnología. El estudio es bibliográfico. Los resultados evidencian que el movimiento motivó la aprobación de la Ley nº 68-978, de 12/11/1968, que trata de la orientación de la enseñanza superior francesa, amplió el número de universidad en el país, creó un nuevo mapa para las universidades, promovió la división de la Universidad de París en 13 unidades a partir de 1971. El mayo de 68 también fue un motivo más para crear la primera universidad de tecnología de Francia, la Universidad de Tecnología de Compiègne, en 1972. Se concluye que Mayo de 68 fue la oportunidad concreta que faltaba para la efectividad de largas reflexiones en Francia para remodelar la estructura de la universidad venida desde la era de Napoleón Bonaparte.

**Palabras clave:** Movimientos Sociales. Movimientos Sociales y Educación. Creación de la universidad. Mayo 68. Autonomía universitaria. Universidad de tecnología.

## Introduction

In Europe, the university as an institution emerged between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Its objective was to train doctors of the church in General Studies (*Studia Generali*), based on the *Trivium* and *Quadrivium*. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Vatican lost its authority over the university, and in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the university, as a producer of knowledge, went through a crisis. Papal power decreased and sovereigns took political control of universities. The institution's objective became the training of managers for the nation-state and of professional staff to meet the demands of the growing bourgeoisie. At that time, the vanguard of scientific thinking took place outside universities, such as private laboratories, libraries, and academies (ALMEIDA FILHO, 2016).

In France, a solution for the university crisis was found during the French Revolution: to close most universities, because they were associated with the old regime and decadent aristocracy (BOAVENTURA, 2009). The *Grandes Écoles*, institutions linked to the State, were created to train professional and technical staff. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, universities were gradually restored in France as a result of demands by political groups and intellectuals.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, more precisely in the year 1968, the university was one of the focus of demands by the largest social movement that took place in France during that century (ROTMAN, 2008), May '68. The sclerotic and anachronistic teaching practice in the universities was questioned; the contents of the classes were challenged and classified as "fragmented subjects"; there was an absence of a vision of synthesis, a predominance of abstraction, the use of devalued schemes, and a non-openness to new ideas, theories, and research (SOARES. PERTANELLA, 2009, p.340). The movement questioned the social utility of abstract knowledge, disconnected from practice, and how the bourgeoisie appropriated it (THIOLLENT, 1998).

The demonstration broke out at the Nanterre University, in the Paris region. The students, led by Daniel Cohn-Bendit, and the university class demanded a new society, different from the traditional and authoritarian model. With the news of the movement on leaflets, posters, newspapers, as well as on the radio, members of the working classes also mobilized. Students and the working class came together due to an ideological struggle, global political issues, democratization, defense of individual and / or collective liberties, condemnation of war, among other issues (THIOLLENT, 1998).

The movement was marked by lectures, debates, and general assemblies which were held in streets, companies, universities, and in the government. Oral intervention also took place in great courses, those held in university amphitheatres, in which the assumptions of professors of economics and social sciences being disconnected from the implications of class struggles were questioned.

May '68 passed, places are different, people and the context have changed. Thiollent (1998, p. 64), when considering the facts of May '68, states that "these are events that many people forgot or wanted to forget, because it jeopardizes the maintenance of the academic establishment". It puts it at risk because it shows that the university cannot maintain itself when students, teachers, and society express together in the streets what they think about it. If, on the one hand, Thiollent's (1998) interpretation justifies why May '68 is intended to be forgotten, on the other, there are materials rescuing and valuing it, like the writings that recover the discussions of intellectuals in the heat of the events of 1968 (SOARES; PETARNELLA, 2009). Moreover, there are images captured at the time revealing the speeches of the protagonists and scenes from the events in Paris (KLEIN, 2018), reports on open French television channels with testimonies and interviews with characters who lived May '68 in the Paris region (PLENEL; AZZOUZI, 2018a, b) and in other regions of France, such as the Hauts-de-France (DUPIRE, 2018). The recovery of private and collective perceptions of those involved can be found in

Portuguese. They focus on testimonials from those who witnessed May '68 in Paris (NU-SOL, 2008) or studied the mobilizations that took place in various parts of the world, such as the writing of Carlos Fuentes, which contemplates France, Czech Republic, and Mexico (SANTANA, 2008). There are also the texts of the articles collection by Pradal that alludes to the 50 years of the event. Among this collection, there is Teixeira's writing (2019), which deals with the context that preceded May 1968 in Germany, as well as a youth articulated with the French students and dissatisfied with the undemocratic university in the May '68 demonstrations. Furthermore, Resende (2018) wrote focusing on the impacts and perceptions of May '68 in Europe and Latin America.

These materials show scenes, testimonies, and readings that keep the memory of May '68 alive. Even after 50 years, it is still questioned whether the movement in France was a myth, a revolution, or the sum of an individual revolution (DUPIRE, 2018). What contributions did May '68 bring to the French university system? Has a new university emerged? The purpose of this study is to present the contributions of May '68 to the expansion of the university system in France, especially to the creation of the university of technology.

### **The context of May '68**

May 1968 refers to the month and year that marked the contemporary history of France. It can be characterized by a 'time' of eight weeks, starting on May 3, 1968, the date the protests began, and going until June 30, when the protests ended. From a sociological viewpoint, May '68 was the epicenter, being between the end of the Algerian War and the first oil crisis, of significant cultural and social changes. From a political point of view, it is the well-known 'red' period, which begins with the first bomb that the United States of America dropped in Vietnam, in 1965, and ends in 1975, with the fall of Saigon (ROTMAN, 2008).

May '68 happened in an unpredictable way (ROTMAN, 2008). It was in a post-World-War-Two context, which allows us to understand that there is a before and an after May '68 (HEES, 2008). One mark of the movement is youth, there are many young people in the 1960s. In 1939, the year the World War II began, 612 thousand children were born in France, 10 years later, in 1949, there were 896 thousand being born (VIANA, 2016). In the 1960s, one-third of the French population was young, under the age of 20; eight million people were between 16 and 24 years of age, in 1968. These were young people who had prolonged their adolescence, as entering the labor market at the age of 14 with the school certificate was common (ROTMAN, 2008). The young generation of the 1960s lived the phase of rock 'n' roll, the Beatles, and the Rolling Stones, which marked a new rhythm in music and added a new vocabulary at the time, idols, the jacket, and jeans to everyday life.

The consumer society was a reality for everyone, new elements, such as soda, washing machines, cars, and televisions were part of the collective desire (BAUDRILLARD, 1995). Streets, buildings, and power plants were built. There were scientific, medical, and technological advancements that made people believe in a better tomorrow. There was a collective belief in unending progress in the 1960s.

However, there were also the victims of the French rural exodus, people who had no purchasing power, worked in power plants, and lived in the HLM (*Habitation à Loyer Modéré*). Alienated and exploited, they lost their capacity for reflection. Two million people who earned the minimum wage (SMIG – *Salair minimum interprofessionnel garanti*) felt excluded from property.

Unemployment, which in 1968 reached 500 thousand people, was another reality. There was social inequality at a regional level. There were extremely backward regions, even though DATAR (*Délégation Interministérielle à l'Aménagement du Territoire*) worked to alleviate regional disparities. The 'Decolonization of the Province' was a political issue, a subject highlighted in a Colloquium organized by the modernist right, in 1966, in Grenoble (ROTMAN,

2008). Gaullist modernization thought of France from its own viewpoint and acted from top to bottom, through the governing apparatus of the State and the government, characterizing an authoritarian government, of vertical dialogue. The May '68 movement had fought against the institutions that traditionally structure society using vertical dialogue, such as the church, school, political power, and company.

There was a chasm in France between modernization and strict customs. An example of this chasm is the debate which arose over the contraceptive pill. Congressman Lucien Neuwirth received support from General Charles de Gaulle to propose the law, which would authorize the prescription of the pill. His fellow congressmen shifted the focus of the vote on December 1967 to moral issues. Morality dictated by good customs in comparison with the individual expression of desires came to light in the May '68 movement. Within schools, there was no mixture of girls and boys, and girls were forced to wear uniforms while in high school. Within the university, girls were considered minors, even after the age of 21. Boys were prohibited from entering girls' quarters; however, students' girlfriends were allowed to enter male quarters. In 1967, in the living quarters of the University of Nanterre, the boys from the Liaison Anarchist Students (LEA - *Liaison des Étudiants Anarchistes*) invaded the female quarters. The police were called in to intervene (ARTIÈRES; ZANCARINI-FOUNEL, 2008).

There was a university overpopulation and evidence of the inadequacy of the university's traditional structure, classroom, and way of teaching to the young crowd. The movement contested

the refusal of the classist nature of the university; the denunciation of false neutrality and false objectivity of knowledge; the denunciation of the parcelization and technocratization of knowledge; the contestation of ex-cathedra courses; the denunciation of conservative professors linked to government politics; the questioning of the place that, in the capitalist division of labor, diplomas will occupy; the denunciation of the scarcity of the possibility of qualified employment (the problem of "debouchés") (THIOLENT, 1998, our translation).

In just over ten years, from 1958 to May 1968, the number of students increased from 150 thousand to 500 thousand in France. Thousands of schools were built, the number of universities multiplied, many assistant professors were hired, yet spaces were lacking. The amphitheatres and university restaurants were packed (ROTMAN, 2008). The type of knowledge taught at universities was also one of the causes of May '68. People inquired about

the social utility of abstract knowledge, separated from practice, and its recovery by the bourgeoisie. There was (...) a rejection of most of the knowledge offered by the university, which, in fact, appeared quite outdated and was unable to meet the expectations of the large contingent of post-war students, especially in the area of social sciences, which had few professional perspectives ( THIOLENT, 1998, p.69, our translation).

The profile of the young generation of '68 was not the same profile as their parents' and grandparents' generations. The older generations were embroiled by the war. The new generation recognized itself as numerous and criticized the customs and values of the ones that came before. In the collective imagination of this young group, there was the feeling that it was the most powerful group in society and needed a renewed reality, different from

the one in which their parents and grandparents lived (VIANA, 2016). Knowledge should be applied to everyday life,

knowledge appeared as essential for the development of the country and civilization. There were classic universities, where "good" young people went to learn things that were "good". And others, built quickly, like Nanterre or Vincennes, in which a number of angry youths rushed out of the 1940s wave: a youth with a desire to know, but not to know anything, not necessarily to know what their classical professors imposed them, but to know what life was and the knowledge of life. It is this state of mind that will explode in 1968! (NU-SOL, 2008, p.13, our translation).

The Algerian War, from 1954 to 1962, showed how much imperialism was present in France in comparison with the humanist pedagogy found in liberal intellectuals and students. The Algerian War was a colonial war, many young people felt betrayed by the French Communist Party and fought for the wounded international honor of the French workers' movement, defending Algeria's independence. Liberal students and intellectuals were inspired by the fight in favor of Algeria and the student movement gained strength (NU-SOL, 2008).

The '68 generation had a latent 'mythology' of World War II, the fight between good and evil, fascism and anti-fascism. It was a generation educated in a black-and-white worldview, who listened on the radio or watched on the television the people of the third world fighting for justice, against injustice, for the right and the power. This justifies the moral revolt which emanated from the images of the Vietnam War. It was the first war broadcast on television: "we watched the bombings live" (ROTMAN, 2008, p. 45). The population watched barefoot people in the rice fields dodging bombs. The images revived the symbolism of the disenfranchised and the powerful, of the oppressed and the oppressors, and the moral revolt turned into a political revolt against imperialism.

In addition to this context, May '68 was also influenced by the crisis of the Fordist production model in the early 1960s, due to factors such as conflicts between disqualified workers, who were in their majority immigrants from Africa and southern Europe that had escaped the control of unions (THIOLENT, 1998).

### **May 1968: a glance at the facts**

The May '68 protests were born within the University of Nanterre. The university was created in 1964, between vacant lots and commuter towns. There were students from the west of Paris, of upper social class, and scholarship students, who lived in university residences (ARTIÈRES; ZANCARINI-FOURNEL, 2008). One of the students, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, of Franco-German origin, led a group called Noir et Rouge within the department of sociology. This department was known for not following traditional figures, such as the ideas of Alain Touraine or Henri Lefèvre, and for being contrary to criticism and social reflections (ROTMAN, 2008).

Cohn-Bendit's group, the LEA, broke with the traditional forms of action of the French National Student Union (l'UNEF – *Union Nationale des Étudiants de France*). Acting with mockery and provocation, the small group was very active, with the intent of recruiting other students to the group.

On January 8, 1968, on the occasion of the inauguration of the swimming pool at the Nanterre University, the Minister of Youth went to the city. At the time, Cohn-Bendit had censored a recent publication that talked about youth and that did not address the issues of sexuality, a theme that in the student's viewpoint should be addressed. The readings that Cohn-

Bendit and his group had on the subject were from the Freud-Marxist thinker Wilhelm Reich, a scholar who advocated full satisfaction and orgasm during sexual fulfillment.

On March 20, 1968, there was a protest against the Vietnam War. The Vietnam National Committee mobilized against a branch of American Express, located behind the Opera in Paris. Some paving stones were thrown into shop windows and a student of the Nanterre University, Xavier Langlade, was arrested. In support of the student, Cohn-Bendit, Jean-Pierre Duteuil, who was also a leader of the movement, and the LEA group mobilized other students and decided to occupy the administrative tower of Nanterre. They were 142 people at one o'clock in the morning inside the university's Council room (ARTIÈRES; ZANCARINI-FOUNEL, 2008). This mobilization was called Movement of March 22, in honor of the Cuban Revolutionary Movement of July 26, 1954, in order to highlight the importance of international symbolism.

Echoes of the Movement of March 22 extended throughout the month of April within the university, despite the release of Xavier Langlade. Members of the movement created an anti-imperialist newspaper, which caused conflicts with teachers, mainly because the discourse defended a university without the ideology of bourgeois society (ROTMAN, 2008) and invoked the profane.

On May 2, 1968, the disturbances of Cohn-Bendit and his group involved Professor René Rémond, who took it to the university board. In Rotman's writing (2008), René was a victim. The administration of the Nanterre University understood that the situation required drastic measures. There was no environment for teaching. Nanterre was closed and Cohn-Bendit and his companions were directed to the university's disciplinary board. The measure was intended to stop the upheavals; however, the opposite happened.

On May 3, 1968, the direction of student leaders, like heads of political factions and UNEF, organized a meeting to support students in Nanterre at the Sorbonne University. These meetings took place ten times a year, but the leaders wanted to take advantage of the situation and organize the meeting then. Three hundred students came together (at that time, only 10% of the students were union members). During the meeting, someone announced that the command of the extreme right-wing movement in the West would arrive and there could be conflict (ROTMAN, 2008). The students took precautions with stones and used tables as shields; however, nothing that was announced happened. The meeting was no different from the other meetings already held. In addition to these assembled students, the library had students working normally at their end of semester activities.

It was at that moment that the police, called by the dean, entered the university. The police were rarely called to enter the university. The police had already entered the University of Sorbonne in 1964, the University of Caen, Nanterre, and Nantes in January and February '68, and the University of Toulouse in April of '68. The differentiating factor this time was the resistance and violence employed by the police against the permanent reaction of Parisian students in 'their' block (ZANCARINI-FOURNEL, 2008).

During the police action, the students did not defend themselves. After some negotiations, they were released for identity control. Without explanation, the police decided to do the procedure in the square. It started out calmly, but gradually became tense and turned into violence. Tree branches on Saint-Michel Avenue were broken and used for barricades. The police used tear gas. A young man was hit on the head by a piece of pavement thrown by a police brigadier and fell. The situation went out of control (ROTMAN, 2008).

On the night of May 3, 1968, approximately at two o'clock in the morning, the detained students were released. Still at night, at the *École Normale Supérieure*, located in the Latin Quarter, in Paris, a meeting of students took place promoted by leftist movements and UNEF factions. Part of the radicalism of May '68 can be explained by the overlap of a revolutionary group with the libertarian and youthful challenges of society at that time, as the decisive role in

the first week of the month was played by a minority. Two of these avant-garde youngsters, Alain Geismar and Alain Krivine, at dawn, on Saturday the 4<sup>th</sup>, after the evening meeting, realized the importance of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the process it had established. They decided to explore the fact, calling for a demonstration on Monday the 6<sup>th</sup>. The demands were three: “*Le retrait des forces de police, l'ouverture de la Sorbonne et la liberation des prisonniers*” (ROTMAN, 2008, p.61).

During the weekend, the police stopped young men at random. The people who were arrested on Friday the 3<sup>rd</sup> were tried. Four students were sentenced to two months in prison in closed regime.

The trial of Cohn-Bendit and his companions on the Disciplinary Board happened on May 6. Sorbonne University was surrounded by police. In the early morning, there were three thousand students on the streets who clashed with police checkpoints. Until the end of the day, there were between 15 and 20 thousand people. The incidents were inevitable, they started in the early afternoon, at the Saint-Germain crossing and reached Place Maubert. In the afternoon, the protest called by UNEF passed by Rue Rennes and arrived at Saint-Germain-des-Prés, where there were police barricades. The largest number of wounded was at the Mabillon intersection.

The photographic records of the events of the 6<sup>th</sup>, in the morning newspapers of the 7<sup>th</sup>, shaping the public opinion in favor of the students. Television did not record impressive scenes. Days later, ORTF (*L'office de radiodiffusion-télévision française*) journalist went on strike to fight censorship.

On May 7, 1968, in Paris, another demonstration took place in the late afternoon at Place Denfert-Rochereau. There were 20 thousand demonstrators and thousands of police officers (ROTMAN, 2008). It was a long march, militants walked through the Champs-Élysées to the Arc de Triomphe. On that day, the movement grew bigger. In Paris, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Jean Roche, decided to close the college in support of the movement (PAPILLON, 1968). Toulouse students went on strike for an unlimited time. The universities of Nantes, Lyon, Lille, Bordeaux, and Marseille also went on strike.

May 8 was dedicated to negotiations among the Minister of National Education, Alain Peyrefitte, FEN (*Fédération des Etudiants Nationalistes*), and the professors' union. A demonstration at the end of the day had been scheduled in Paris, but heavy rain prevented it. Support for students came from many professors and important personalities, such as Nobel laureate in Physics, Alfred Kastler. Despite the Minister's willingness to open the Sorbonne, the day ended without this happening. Outside the capital, between 100 and 120 thousand people marched in the cities, a public success for the organizers (ZANCARINI-FOURNEL, 2008).

On the 9<sup>th</sup>, a sit-in was organized around the Sorbonne. Peacefully, the students sat down, as they could not enter the university. The idea came from Cohn-Bendit and gathered approximately three thousand people (ROTMAN, 2008).

On the 10<sup>th</sup>, in Paris, at Place Denfert-Rochereau, in the late afternoon, a meeting was scheduled. With the solidarity of high school students, the total number of people reached 30 thousand. They marched throughout the Latin Quarter, occupied the entire Avenue Saint-Michel, the Jardin de Luxembourg, and Place Edmond-Rostand. The small streets around the Sorbonne were also occupied. There was no violence and the young people talked among themselves, until around 9 pm, with no known reason, the riot started. In less than an hour, the streets of the Latin Quarter were unpaved. Approximately at midnight, a delegation of professors led by Alain Touraine, tried to mediate with the Sorbonne dean. Cohn-Bendit infiltrated and joined the group of professors in negotiations with the dean. He demanded the Sorbonne to reopen. When asked by the dean what would happen if the request were accepted, he said that nothing, he would just bring three orchestras to the Sorbonne and dance the night away. Cohn-Bendit also had this taunting demeanor. Rotman (2008) states that at that moment the Sorbonne dean received a phone call. It was Minister Alain Peyrefitte, who wanted to know



if Cohn-Bendit was at the dean's office. The dean confirmed and Peyrefitte asked for mediations to stop, since negotiating with Cohn-Bendit was discouraged.

Until 2 am there was a moment of calm, then the police repressed the barricades and unjustified violence followed. The episode became known as the Night of the Barricades. There were 367 people injured, 460 arrested, and 188 damaged vehicles (ZANCARINI-FOURNEL, 2008).

In Strasbourg, as a reflection of the events in Paris, the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> brought together a thousand students, out of 17 thousand enrolled in the university, who occupied the Department of Language and Linguistics, raised a red flag, and called for the university's autonomy.

At the dawn of the 11<sup>th</sup>, with the news of the violence employed by the police being broadcast by the newspapers and radio, public opinion was in favor of the students (ROTMAN, 2008). During the day, workers' unions met, taking sides in favor of students. The leaders of the CFDT (*Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail*) and CGT (*Confédération Générale du Travail*) unions called for a general strike and demonstration on the 13<sup>th</sup>. French Prime Minister Georges Pompidou returned from his official trip to Afghanistan with the intention of stopping the spread of incidents. He gave in to the three requests of the students: the withdrawal of forces, the reopening of the Sorbonne, and the release of prisoners.

On May 13, a big parade took place and the Sorbonne was opened since the morning with a festive atmosphere and orchestra and pianos livening up. Television broadcast images of the opening of the University announcing that, according to the media, there were 171 thousand participants (ZANCARINI-FOURNEL, 2008).

On May 14, the workers' strike began. The strike was approved by vote at the Sud-Aviation Plant in Bouguenais, in the Loire-Atlantique department, in the Pays de la Loire region. Instigated by an anarcho-unionist nucleus, two thousand workers occupied the plant and kidnapped the boss. The red flag was raised. Later, the director of the Renault plant in Cléon was also kidnapped. The workers' claim was about salary, especially to have a minimum wage, as the SMIG (*Salair Minimum Interprofessionnel Garanti*), 40 hours of weekly labor, and more dignified working conditions. From the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> there were six thousand workers on strike. On May 23, there were more than seven thousand strikers, becoming the biggest strike of the labor movement in France (ROTMAN, 2008). Other categories joined the workers, such as architects, doctors, artists, and clerks.

The workers' strike was characterized by the occupations of companies. Workers were on strike pickets and spent the night inside the workplace, the work equipment was not damaged. To pass the time, strikers played cards and ball. According to the police, the protesters from Paris and the provinces totaled 80 thousand; while for the counting service, they were 220 to 230 thousand and for the organizers, one million (ZANCARINI-FOURNEL, 2008).

On May 16, students marched, leaving the University of Sorbonne and going to the doors of Renault in solidarity with the workers. For a while, they maintained a solidarity committee in Paris and the provinces. Some of these students remained with the workers inside the companies, which caused the CGT (*Confédération Générale du Travail*), due to fear of some anarchist reaction, to order the strikers not to allow these students to enter the companies; however, they were able to express their support from the outside.

On the 17<sup>th</sup>, some militants closed the Sorbonne and formed a council to maintain the occupation. At the end of the day, a march took place in the Latin Quarter toward Boulogne-Billancourt.

On the 18<sup>th</sup>, General Charles de Gaulle returned from his trip to Romania and demanded from Grimaud, the prefect of the police, and from Fouchet, Minister of the Interior, the evacuation of Sorbonne and the Odéon, which were filled with demonstrators. Pompidou told General de Gaulle that there was no way to remove the militants.

On May 19, the Cannes Festival was interrupted. Since the 17<sup>th</sup>, the *Syndicat de la critique de cinéma* suggested that the festival should stop in support of students and workers.

On the 21<sup>st</sup>, the chemical, textile, and automobile industries were at a standstill, as were employees of Peugeot, Michelin, Bréguet, Citroën, the electricity company (EDF - *Électricité de France*), and the gas company (GDF - *Gaz de France*). Many public servants and large stores had stopped. Professional groups, magazine writers, the Society of Men of Letters, the Orders of Doctors and Architects, all joined the strike (ZANCARINI-FOURNEL, 2008). Cohn-Bendit, who had German nationality, had his residence permit to live in France withdrawn by the authorities, who took advantage of a trip the leader took to Berlin and Amsterdam to revoke his permit.

On the 24<sup>th</sup>, a students' demonstration took place at Gare de Lyon, in Paris. Criticisms of a mechanical and capitalist society were latent. The police cordoned off the area and intense confrontation arose. A policeman was hit by a Molotov cocktail and started to burn in Panthéon Square. The incident prompted the police to ask the prefect of police for permission to fire, but a CRS (*Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité*) operation arrived in time to prevent the shooting from starting. Alain Krivini, one of the movement's leaders, advised that there should be no looting. Maurice Grimaud suggested that the protesters occupy the Latin Quarter at night, as it was known territory. Paris woke up appalled by the excesses of violence (ROTMAN, 2008).

On the 25<sup>th</sup>, just after midday, negotiations at the Ministry of Labor among government, unions, and employers began. Negotiations continued for the next two days. The result of this event was called the Grenelle Agreements, named after the street where the Ministry was located. An average increase of 10% in net wages, an increase in 35% of the SMIG, and the recognition of union representation within companies were established. However, the outcome of the negotiations did not please the heads of the labor movement, especially the Renault workers, in Boulogne-Billancourt. Renault workers remained on strike, as well as all other metalworkers as they understood that three weeks of strike was a long time for an increase of only 10%.

Wednesday, May 29, 1968, the protesters took to the streets with the slogan "popular government", making political demands and no longer of a material nature.

On May 30, at 4 pm, General de Gaulle used the radio, since the television was on strike, and made a speech addressing the French. At the beginning of the speech, he announced: "I am not going to leave". He also announced the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly and the organization of legislative elections. The people took to the street. According to the police department, there were between 300 and 400 thousand people at Place de la Concorde and on Champs-Élysées, more people than in the demonstration on the 13<sup>th</sup> (ZANCARINI-FOURNEL, 2008).

General de Gaulle's approximately 4-minute long speech stalled the acute crisis, although the strike continued for another three weeks in some sectors. The Sorbonne reopened immediately. Transportation, RATP (*Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens*), schools, and public services took five or six days to return to normal. In some metallurgy companies and large automobile plants, places of deep-rooted proletarian tradition and class consciousness, the strike remained. This was the case of the Renault plant located in Flins, the Citroën plant, and the Peugeot plant in Sochaux, where the forces of CRS (*Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité*) took action. There were conflicts, many injured, and two people killed (ROTMAN, 2008).

On June 10, a young high school student, 17-year-old Gilles Tautin, a member of the UJCML (*Union des jeunesses communistes marxistes-léninistes*) movement, drowned in the Seine in an attempt to escape the riot police, near the Renault Flins plant in Meulan.

On June 11, as a result of the struggle between the workers at the Peugeot plant in Sochaux, 24-year-old Pierre Beylot was shot and killed by CRS (*Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité*) forces and 49-year-old Henri Blanchet died after falling from a wall (CALINON, 2008).

In addition to the two deceased, May '68 had another three in total. On May 24, in Paris, a grenade killed a man. In Lyon, a burning truck, thrown by the demonstrators toward the law

enforcement forces, killed a Lacroix police commissioner (ROTMAN, 2008). On May 26, 1968, 26-year-old Philippe Mathérion was stabbed to death in the Latin Quarter (CALINON, 2008).

The strike ended with the agreement that stipulated raises equal to or greater than those of the Grenelle agreement, except for the food industry, which did not exceed 7.5%. In the public sector, the most substantial raise was in Defense, with an additional 18%. In the private sector, the highest raise was in the oil industry, with an additional 17%. The most significant raise was the SMIG, in 35%, as of July 1, it went from 2.22 to 3 francs per hour of work. Companies in the marginal sectors, such as the textile and clothing industries in northern France, which were unable to pay the new wages, carried out individual or collective layoffs (ZANCARINI-FOURNEL, 2008).

In political terms, May '68 meant that General de Gaulle's time was over; Prime Minister Pompidou had political strength; and the Constitutional Assembly was moving toward being more conservative than before. At the first post-May '68 rally, Pompidou broke with General de Gaulle. On June 15, 1969, Pompidou was elected president of the Fifth Republic in France, with 58.21% of the votes.

Among other consequences of May '68, there is the approval of the reduction of the legal age to 18, as well as the approval of the law of divorce and the voluntary termination of a pregnancy, which occurred under the government of Valéry René Marie Georges Giscard d'Estaing (1971-1981).

The post-May '68 French republican school was criticized from two points of view. On the one hand, it was seen as a capitalist school, an instrument of social and intellectual domination, while, on the other, it was the denial of the school. Ivan Illich defended a society without schools and, consequently, the destruction of the bourgeois university was discussed.

### **Contributions of May '68 to the French university system**

Although May '68 ended and everything returned to normal within the university (VIANA, 2016), the movement provoked changes to the university system in France. The approval of the Orientation Act of Higher Education, Law No. 68-978, of November 12, 1968 (FRANCE, 1968), is one of the first direct consequences of May '68. The law became known as the Faure Law, named after the Minister of Education who took office after the movement.

This law is significant for representing the end of the university organized by the Third Republic of Louis Liard and the Law of 1896. The Faure law created the possibility of a new type of university in France. Public establishments of scientific and cultural nature (*les Établissements Publics à la Scientifique et Culturel* - EPSC) disappear, being replaced by teaching and research units (*des Unités d'Enseignement et de Recherche* - UER). In Title I °, Article I °, the Law states that the fundamental mission of the university is the development and transmission of knowledge, the development of research, and the training of men.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the university must respond to the needs of the nation by providing courses in all areas<sup>3</sup> (FRANCE, 1968, p. 10579, our translation), account for regional development, contribute to students' professional guidance, and develop international university cooperation, in addition to having continuous training and permanent education as their mission.

The law also provided the three major principles of the university: autonomy, participation, and multidisciplinary. Autonomy concerns the fact that each institution is responsible for determining its statute and internal structure. Pedagogical autonomy means that each EPSC fixes the content of the programs, the research programs, the pedagogical methods, and the modalities of knowledge control. In addition, the UERs have no statute. Financial autonomy refers to the management of resources from State credit. Each EPSC manages its

<sup>2</sup> L'élaboration et la transmission de la connaissance, le développement de la recherche et la formation des hommes.

<sup>3</sup> Elles doivent répondre aux besoins de la nation en lui fournissant des cadres dans tous les domaines.

resources, even though being subject to general inspection of national education and its expenditures subject to inspection by the Court of Auditors.

Nevertheless, the principle of autonomy had restrictions, the provisions included in the Law and its implementing Decrees restricted statutory autonomy. Moreover, freely defined university diplomas and national diplomas were maintained according to the conditions established by the Ministry of Education, and an increase in the universities' resources was not guaranteed (DUPONT, 2007).

Participation is guaranteed through the election of boards to manage EPSCs. Each council is composed of professors, researchers, students, and non-teaching members who are selected based on their regional competence and performance (FRANCE, 1968). The principle of participation was also contemplated by the creation of new consultative bodies, such as the National Council for Higher Education and Research (*Conseil National de l'Enseignement Supérieur Et de la Recherche - CNESER*), which includes elected representatives of professors and students, universities and other higher education institutions, as well as a third of external people representing "great national interests" and the Regional Councils for Higher Education and Research (*les Conseils Régionaux de l'Enseignement Supérieur Et de la Recherche - CRESER*).

The principle of multidisciplinary established that universities involved, as far as possible, the arts and letters in science and technology. The principle also presented, in Article 6, the possibility of a university having a dominant vocation, meaning to end the isolated areas contemplated by the faculties.

The approval of the Orientation Act of Higher Education was the result of the circumstances of May '68, being facilitated because there were intense discussions about university reform since World War II. The discussions inspired two symposia in Caen, in 1956 and 1966, two special issues of *Esprit* magazine (May and June 1964), projects published on *Le Monde* or *Le Figaro*, and the book by Gérald Antoine and Jean-Claude Passeron, *La réforme de l'université*, in 1966. The Faure Law was also a response to many failed attempts to reform the higher education system of the Napoleonic era (DESVIGNES, 2014).

Furthermore, May 1968 was also the cause of an effective change to the French university system in the map of universities. France had 20 universities in 1968, most of them located in the Paris region and the others in large cities. Discussions about the decentralization of universities and the creation of new universities took place since the end of World War II (LEQUIN, 2015). Seeking to avoid the agglomeration of university students in Paris and to decentralize the capital, by 1973 France had 60 universities located throughout the national territory which created a new university map (LEQUIN; LAMARD, 2016).

The division of the University of Paris into 13 universities can also be attributed to the aftermath of May '68, effective as of January 1, 1971. This was the division: University of Paris I (Panthéon-Sorbonne), University of Paris II (Panthéon-Assas), University of Paris III (Sorbonne-Nouvelle), University of Paris IV (Paris-Sorbonne), University of Paris V (Descartes), University of Paris VI (Pierre-et-Marie- Curie and Jussieu Campus), University of Paris VII (Denis-Diderot), University of Paris VIII (Vincennes-Saint-Denis), University of Paris IX (Paris-Dauphine), University of Paris X (Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense), University of Paris XI (Paris-Sud), University of Paris XII (Paris-Val-de-Marne), and University of Paris XIII (Paris-Nord) (LEQUIN, 2015).

The increase in the number of universities and the decentralization of the university from exclusively large cities to also include small cities spread across the country are also consequences of May '68. However, even if the French university system in place before the 1968 movement was questioned and discussions were held with alternatives to update it, forces of political resistance prevented the changes because the main function of the

university in French society was "to form a restricted elite who are close to the established power... fact which begins to change in the 1960s"(LEQUIN, 2015, p. 82 - our translation).

The fact that the Orientation Act of Higher Education made it possible to create a public institution of scientific, cultural, and professional character was fundamental to start discussions about a different model of university. This had been thought of a long time before and, in a way, responded to the students' demands of the May '68 and their desire for a university that was closer to professional life, to the concrete needs of people by combining solid human training with mastery and know-how, promoting a balance between theory and practice. The model that emerged was called, at the time, after changes in nomenclature, the university of technology.

As previously stated, the idea of this model had a long history in France. Technical education had already been discussed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Society of Civil Engineers proposed, in 1848, an 'industrial university', a project that did not materialize. Technical education at a higher level started after 1919. In order to arrive at the idea of a university of technology, many reflections took place, including at the Caen Colloquium in 1956. There an experimental university in the area of technology was thought of, but, while there was one group concerned with making this a reality, there was another one who fought against it.

The group interested in creating this new model of university continually rescued the idea. In 1964, a committee called "*Réflexions pour 1985*", chaired by the Minister of Education, Pierre Guillaumat, assigned Bernard Delapalme the role of general rapporteur to create a different university, which at the time was called the University of Applied Sciences (LEQUIN, 2015). In 1966, the idea of creating a university of Applied Sciences was taken up by the Director of Higher Education, Pierre Aigrain, after another Colloquium in Caen. At this event, twenty new universities with a structure for twenty thousand students were thought of, the intention was to leave the Paris region with fifteen universities and locate the other universities in cities throughout France, completely remodeling the map of this type of education.

May 1968 further aroused the idea of creating a different university in France, although the idea was not entirely original, since the Anglo-Saxon world had these different universities, but in France, it was still a pipedream. In 1969, a group called Paris-Nort, formed by university students and industrialists, drew the guidelines and administrative and pedagogical conditions for a university of science and technology to be implemented in the city of Villetaneuse (LEQUIN; LAMARD, 2016). Then, a study by the DATAR group (*Délégation à l'Aménagement du Territoire et à l'Action Régionale*) evaluated the location and territorial characteristics of the city of Compiègne and decided that the new university of technology would be there. The city was found to be the place due to being close to Paris, having quick access to airports, having a robust road and rail network nearby, being historically the headquarters of the first art and business school at the time of Napoleon Bonaparte, and being a calm city, which would not present the potential for university riots like those of 1968 (UTC, 2013).

In 1970, a group formed by Minister Olivier Guichard was put in charge of designing the university of technology in Compiègne. At the request of Guichard, Bernard Dalapalme was responsible for giving more precise guidelines to the project and making a pilot model of this new university, based on technology, happen. The text was delivered in October 1971. In 1972, Decree No. 72-893, of October 2, created the University of Technology of Compiègne (UTC), a public institution of scientific, cultural, and professional character made possible by the Faure Law and heavily influenced by the reflections of the events of May '68.

Currently (2020), France has three universities of technology. In 1994, the University of Technology of Troyes was created, and the University of Technology of Belfort-Montbéliard followed, in 1999.

A major advantage of France's technology universities is that they exclusively graduate engineers. The French reality in 1968 showed a contrast between the emerging industrial reality

and the training of engineers that was practically concentrated in the Paris region, “very specialized (therefore, not very open to new fields or new branches of activity), with highly theoretical lessons, but with no research and no real contact with reality (internships were still rare), all with limited recruitment<sup>4</sup>” (LEQUIN; LAMARD, 2016, p. 178 - our translation). UTC appears as a response to a concrete demand for training engineers.

Another point raised by the 1970s was that the proposed model for the university of technology represented the middle ground between what a classical university offered (solid human and theoretical training) and what engineering schools offered (knowledge applied to practice) (LEQUIN, 2015).

the Orientation Act of November 12, 1968, promotes experiments that began in the summer of 1968 (Vincennes, Dauphine) and new university configurations. However, it still leaves a double separation, which is also typically French: first, between engineering schools (a hundred in 1968) and universities, second, between higher education and scientific research<sup>5</sup> (LEQUIN; LAMARD, 2016, p.178 – our translation).

The university of technology emerged precisely with the intention of being an intermediate alternative between universities and engineering schools, as well as between the concepts that involved higher education and scientific research.

Another difference is the student's admission, which happens through a personalized selection and is very different from the student's admission to a classic university. To access the classical university, the student must have a BAC (baccalauréat). Having a BAC means that the student obtained at least 10-out-of-20 correct answers in the national exam taken after completing high school studies. A student can take the BAC only once and it includes cumulative content. The number of correct answers awards a *mention*. “marks between 12 and 14/20 are called *Assez Bien* (enough), between 15 and 16/20 are called *Bien* (good), and from 17 to 20/20 are called *Très Bien* (very good)” (CECHIN, 2019, p. 81).

In technology universities, the selection prioritizes baccalauréat marks *très bien* and *bien*, which means that the students who intend to apply for a place in one of the technology universities must have had a mark between 75 and 100% at the BAC. In addition to the analysis of the marks, there is an interview that identifies the candidates' talents, such as artistic skills, like music, dance, drawing, or other skills that make the student stand out for being different from the majority. The idea is to recruit potentially talented and innovative people on the principle that students who have different profiles produce innovative and creative solutions to solve original problems, which arise from university contracts with industries, mainly local, and of which not even a professor would have the answer for. Notably, research is part of undergraduate and graduate courses (CECHIN, 2019).

The university of technology also offers the courses as if they were on a menu. The students choose the subjects that they are interested in studying and training. The idea is that future engineers may be autonomous from the beginning of the course. The new students choose scientific (such as physics, chemistry, mathematics) and technical subjects (such as computer

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<sup>4</sup> très spécialisées (donc peu ouvertes à de nouvelles filières ou à de nouvelles branches d'activités), avec des enseignements théoriques très élevés mais sans recherche et sans véritable contact avec le réel (les stages sont encore rares), le tout avec un recrutement restreint.

<sup>5</sup> La loi d'orientation du 12 novembre 1968 favorise des expérimentations engagées depuis l'été 1968 (Vincennes, Dauphine) et de nouvelles configurations universitaires. Cependant elle laisse en l'état une double séparation, elle-aussi typiquement française : d'abord entre écoles d'ingénieurs (une centaine en 1968) et universités, d'autre part entre enseignement supérieur et recherche scientifique.

science, machine design) from a common academic program. The objectives of this program are to improve the student's ability “to communicate in writing and orally, in French and in a foreign language”<sup>6</sup> (UTC, 2019, p. 17 - our translation) and to present “an opening for the human and social sciences”<sup>7</sup> (UTC, 2020, p.17 - our translation).

After three or four semesters in this academic program, the student must have completed a minimum of 102 credits, which are divided as follows: scientific knowledge (48 credits), techniques and methods (24 credits), technology and human sciences (24 credits), and internship (6 credits). These credits come from Unités de Valeur (UV), which are listed in the menu of subjects (UTC, 2019a). The common program prepares the students for the *branche*, the engineering area they choose to graduate in. The idea is to make students attend the basic subjects (or common program subjects) before choosing their courses. The adoption of a common academic program and the UV at the time of the creation of the university of technology sought to address the claims of the students of May of '68 for a university that met their particular needs. The system, innovative in the 1970s, today is no longer exclusive to universities of technology, since the classical French universities adopt UVs as well (CECHIN, 2019).

Moreover, the university of technology offers a third of its subjects in the areas of human and social sciences (LEQUIN; LAMARD, 2016). The training and performance of the engineer are directly related to the provision of services to improve a man's life. Having access to concepts and theories of sociology, psychology, anthropology, among other humanities disciplines is fundamental for the engineer to being able to communicate and express ideas in written and oral modalities in several languages. For foreign students, UVs for learning French are offered. The university understands that foreign students need to be able to express themselves in order to understand the cultures of the university of technology and the country, as well as its customs, people, and behavior through language (UTC, 2013).

In the 1970s, it was also innovative to offer two internships to all students who entered the university, starting in the first phase, because the admission to the university of technology is permitted at various times. This internship can take place in either France or foreign countries. Two other aspects of the university of technology are the 5-year training of engineers and the international profile of the students, a characteristic present since the first class (UTC, 2013).

May '68 was a driving force to advance many years of discussion and change the university structure, enabling a new map of the locations of universities in French territory and an increase in the number of universities. Furthermore, the movement and the Faure Law were certainly vital to the creation of the first university of technology in France, along with other many factors. Lequin and Lamard (2016, p. 192 - our translation) wondered: “Can we conclude that ‘the university of technology’, founded in 1972 in Compiègne, was born of Faure’s Orientation Act of Higher Education and, more specifically, of June-May 1968?” To which they concluded that “Yes, but ... or No, ... but <sup>8</sup>” (LEQUIN; LAMARD, 2016, 192 - our translation) What the authors meant is precisely that the Law and the May of '68, if isolated from the history of discussions and struggles to create a different university, would not have caused the creation of the university of technology. Still, the discussions and versions of the university of technology project during the various phases until the final version would not have been possible without the May '68 and the Faure Law, because there is a political, social and cultural context that prepared the final version of the UTC project, which came alive after May '68 and the Faure Law.

In France, the university of technology, the classical university, and the engineering school have different roles and profiles recognized by society. In Brazil, there is a single university of technology, the Federal University of Technology – Paraná (UTFPR), which has 13 campuses and,

<sup>6</sup> d'améliorer votre aptitude à communiquer par écrit et oral, en français et en langue étrangère.

<sup>7</sup> d'apporter une ouverture sur les sciences humaines et sociales.

<sup>8</sup> Oui, mais...ou Non,...mais.

in 2017, the date of the last management report, more than 33 thousand students enrolled in all modalities (UTFPR, 2018). The partnership between the University of Technology of Compiègne and the UTFPR dates to the 1970s, when the UTFPR, then called CEFET-PR (Federal Center for Technological Education of Paraná) sent teachers to be trained at UTC. Later, UTC, on the occasion of the elaboration of the project to transform CEFET-PR into a university, sent professors to present the model of the institution to the servers at the Center's headquarters in Curitiba and at one of its decentralized units, located in Medianeira (CECHIN, 2019).

Fifty years after May 1968, it is still remembered. Echoes of the movement are heard in France and other parts of the world. The expansion of the university of technology in French territory is one of those echoes and, after analyzing carefully, the influence of UTC in the UTFPR project reflects this movement in Brazil, regarding the university specialized in one field of knowledge.

## Conclusion

May '68 was a very intense movement in France which lasted from May to June 1968. It was a consequence of several factors: the large number of children born after World War II, who were in their youth in the 1960s; the university overpopulation; the inadequacy of the traditional structure of the university; and the classrooms, the way of teaching. It arose from different causes: the emerging consumer society; two million people earning only the minimum wage; 500 thousand unemployed people; a scientific advance in society; a crisis in the Fordist production process; an abyss between modernization and rigid customs; memories of the World War II, the perception of an imperialist government during the Algerian War (1954-1962), among others.

When the May '68 demonstrations ended, France returned to work. The changes thought for the universities found in the movement the opportunity to happen. The reform of French higher education, which was thought since the end of World War II, was implemented with the Faure Law, passed in the same year. The increase in the number of universities in the country, an issue also discussed after 1945, took place. Higher education was not only in the Paris region anymore and a new map was created for universities in French territory.

The post-May 1968 period saw an increase in the number of universities in France, from 20 in 1968, to 60 universities in 1973. The division of the University of Paris into 13 units was another contribution of the movement. In 1972, a pilot project for a new university emerged, the first university of technology was created in the city of Compiègne. It graduated exclusively engineers, presenting an intermediate model between classical universities and engineering schools, between theoretical studies and applied research due to the use of the course credits, the offer of a third of the subjects in the areas of humanities and social sciences, which included language studies, and internships during the course.

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