

Excerpt from *La Clef des Songes* by Alexander Grothendieck

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»03

) Félix Carrasquer (1): hatching of a mission

(January 7-17) (**) Since the series of notes on Neill and on Summerhill (from December 2 to 11), I propose to give an overview of the educational work of my

(*) (January 7) We will also remember that it is the affection of his family, and subsequently that of the friends he admired intensely and with devotion not-sionné, who missed him most sorely throughout his childhood and far before in his adulthood - until around the age of thirty. So it is not surprising that the rest of his life was not too much to fill a need so intense and remained so long unfulfilled.

(**) (January 17) The following five notes give an overview of the educational work of Félix Carrasquer. After writing the first draft of these notes on January 7 and 8, I had a certain number of additional details during two long telephone conversations with Félix, the9 and eCela led me to review and expand quite considerably, in two or three different movements, the original notes. So, exceptionally, it did not seem possible to me to date each of these five notes separately.

friend Félix Carrasquer. As I do not have the documents on hand and my memory is faulty, I was only waiting for him to answer some questions about his two experiences of self-managed schools in Spain. Finally, that's it!

Félix and his wife Mati are very old friends, and "family friends" what is more. I met them in 1960, almost 30 years ago. Félix had recently left prison, where he had spent twelve years, between 1946 and February 1959. He had been arrested in 1946 in Barcelona for clandestine political activity, while he was participating in an attempt at reorganization of the CNT (*). He and Mati are anarchists, and their educational activity has been inseparable from their militant political commitment. After the failure of the Spanish Revolution and the debacle of anarchist and republican forces in late 1938, early 1939, Félix took refuge in France in February 1939, where he shared the fate of tens of thousands of Spanish political refugees, picked up like malfaitutors and herded into makeshift concentration camps, set up in great haste by the French government called "Front Populaire". Félix spent four years at Noè camp. (My father had stayed there, before being deported by the Germans in 1942 and killed at Auschwitz ...) He managed to escape from it in October 1943. It was no small feat: moment he was already blind, for ten years (**). However, he managed to return clandestinely to Spain in May 1944, for an unthinkable clandestine political work which he managed, however, God knows how, to continue for two years before being arrested.

(*) CNT = Confederacion Nacional de los Trabajadores. It was the main unionization of workers in Spain, with an anarchist tendency, which became illegal after Franco's victory in 1939.

(**) For a reason that escapes me, Félix did not learn Braille writing. He writes his mail, articles, books etc, but to reread himself, as for reading books, newspapers, etc, he is obliged to call on outside help. Since his release from prison in 1959, his wife Mati has taken on the sometimes thankless role of Félix's permanent secretary. She had met him for the first time in 1935, coming to visit the school on rue Vallespir (which will be discussed extensively in the following notes). She was herself a teacher, dedicated body and soul to her educational vocation. What she saw at school on rue Vallespir made a deep impression on her. She must have clearly felt the scope of Félix's mission, and to know that his own way would be to associate himself with this mission as far as possible. She met Félix again in 1946, when he was working in hiding, and it was from this moment that they put their common contact. Félix will be arrested the same year and will spend twelve years in prison, herself will make two sedays in prison for political offenses, one year and two years. They will meet again when Félix leaves prison, in February 1959. The following year, they take the path of exile together.

When I got to know Félix, he had just spent sixteen years in captivity (with a two-year interlude of "clandestine freedom"), including twelve years in Franco's prison. The hardest part, he says, is that being blind, he was unable to read or write during all these years. It was one of the great days of his life, February 7, 1959, when he found himself outside prison walls, free at last! In a heavily watched freedom, it is true. He who was the action itself! After one year, he obtains the authorization of emigrer in France (in July 1960), but with a permanent ban on returning to Spain (*).

From the first meeting with him, I was struck by the energy that is released was managing in person (**). In his way of speaking too: saying the essential and

(*) Despite this ban, since 1966 Félix has already taken the risk of making regular illegal stays in Spain, at least once a year for political work (in trade union circles in particular) whose tenants and outs escape me. Since 1971, and despite the fact that he continued to be prohibited from staying until after Franco's death in 1975, Félix and Mati moved slow in Spain definitely, in a kind of rustic chalet at the foot of the Tibidado mountain, next to Barcelona. He was lucky not to be arrested in These years of semi-underground. Today Félix and Mati still live in the same rural places, with family to them.

(**) It is interesting to note that it is this impression of intense energy virile, active, which struck me the most and which my memory recorded and retained. In fact, at the time of this meeting and in the quarter of a century that followed, myself was very strongly imbued with the values "yang", "masculines" of the surrounding society. Since the age of eight I had unconsciously shaped myself according to these values, repressing and ignoring more or less the "yin", "feminine" sides of my being. But I believe that Félix about it beats me, and by far - he is "the most" yang "man, the most extreme male I have meet. One day seeing me cry in front of him, in a moment of emotion (him lisant one of my father's very last letters), he was sincerely surprised (but not shocked or even, I think, embarrassed). He had a hard time imagining that an adult man could cry, it was something (he explained to me) that never happened to him. never goes. He has a will and a capacity for control, which have become conde nature, as I have not encountered in any other being, with the sole exception (as regards the will) of Fujii Guruji. This only prevents in his relations to others, Félix does not have his spontaneity, he fortunately has nothing of the block of granite or bronze. I know him to be confident, generous, compassionate without sentimentality, and in his affections he is very delicate and unyielding foolproof.

On the other hand, more than once I have found that he was hardly inclined to enter into the thoughts or feelings of others "and to be so even to respond to them reallement - that he lacked the ability to listen that Mati, she, no less generous than him, has at the highest *degree*. I also noticed the same difficulty in myself, vis-à-vis my students in particular, and that was perhaps my biggest shortcoming as a teacher. (I probe this aspect of my mathematician past somewhat in the note "Failure of a teaching (1)", n ° 23 (iv), in the first part of Récoltes et Semailles.) But it seemed to me that with Félix it was much worse than with me! It is safe for me that within

1930s, Félix had to have an inner flexibility, and in particular a capacity of listening, which I did not know him later; because (as he himself is the first to point out) it is precisely these qualities (more particularly "feminine"), even more than the virile qualities which are only too tender to take the lead, which are essential to make the school a "school of freedom". Surely these qualities of flexibility and listening must have dulled and hardened under the very hard pressure of the sixteen years of captivity, which on the other hand will have tended to further reinforce by a defensive reaction effect ": will, obstinacy, energy in action, structuration, concentration ...

standing there, without getting lost in unnecessary words or words (*). It is rare, a man who spends long years in captivity without remaining deeply marked, without its vital impulse being irretrievably affected. By this energy who seemed indomitable, he reminded me of my father, who had spent eleven years of his life in t5-ariste prison, from 1906 to 1917, therefore between the ages of sixteen and twenty-seven, sansourt-a.4 * en to be started ...

Félix was born in 1905, so he was fifty years old when we met. Now he has eighty-two. It's been over ten years since I haven't seen him, but on the newspaper clipping he just sent me, where there's a picture of him taken at home, it's like we just got around to leave !

(*) Unfortunately, Félix's written expression is far from being up to his spontaneous speech. Félix is a great educator, but he has not developed a gift as a writer who serves his message. The texts of his pen are often weighed down by the abuse of more or less abstract or technical and not very speaking terms, and by the accumulation of epithets which distract attention or which put it to sleep, rather than illuminate it. or call out. The reader must constantly make an effort to lift the heavy lid of the Félix style, to see and appear in the bowl the substantial meat that the author has prepared for us.

For Mati, who has a very fine sense of style, I felt that his work of secretto keep silent was often a martyrdom (supported, needless to say, valiantly ...). It would have been perfect if Felix had entrusted him with writing by the menu in her own style, limpid and alive like very clear water, the books and texts of all kinds which he would have proposed to her as and whenre a detailed outline of facts and ideas. In other words, let these texts be a work common, where both would have put this that he really has better to offer, instead of Mati being confined to a perpetually subordinate and pure stewardship role, far below his means, no less rich than those of Félix. We feel that these two beings, both of such a rare human quality, were made to complement each other. But by a strange irony of fate, or rather by the particular mark, in the existence of Félix and Mati, tenacious human contradictions, they did not know or wanted to realize in their married life this creative cooperation that they had each continued in their educational work, and to which they had each reached with his pupils, during a few inspired and fruitful years ...

In the years following their emigration to France and until their (second) illegal return to Spain in 1971, Félix and Mati lived with their own family on a farm, in the countryside near Toulouse (the second capital of Spain!), where they all lived poorly on a small chicken farm. Our two families were very close, we often spent a good part of the long holidays at home, with all the children, who gave themselves to their heart in the great outdoors. They helped us, too, by their friendship and their greater maturity, at a particularly hard time, which was to last for a long time. These years still deeply mark the life of the family. These are those who don't forget themselves. We lost sight of each other afterwards, especially since they returned to Spain - at their own risk! But I think it's no exaggeration to say that Félix and Mati, each in his own way, were both the closest friends I had in my life, and those too, more than anyone else I knew I could count on absolutely, if the occasion should ever arise.

This is a strange coincidence, since it is not in this very personal capacity that I am led to speak here of Félix. In fact, the reflection of the past four or five weeks made me rethink what I knew about the work Félix's educational work, and she showed me this work and its no one in a renewed light. He is for me one of those "sowers" that I mentioned at the end of the penultimate note. It is sure that I thought of him then, that I knew so well with Mati among his family, in their frugal life, warm and without pretense! And in this long series of notes devoted to an unexpected reflection on "mutants", he will be the last person on my list the eighteenth, among the men of this century and the last century which I feel in a way or on the other, an heir. I hesitated a little to include it here to not look to want to pin a friend. No one is a prophet among his own (108)! Because often you do not see the greatness of a man or an event, when you have your nose right in front - you have to take a step back first, to see it. But in these weeks of reflection on the critical issue of education, this necessary step back, I believe, took place by itself. I see better now the rattle of a work and a mission that remained practically unknown to the general public. All the more reason to talk about it, and to do my best to make them known.

Félix spent the first fourteen years of his life in the village where he was born, Albalate de Cinca, where his father was secretary of the town hall. A lively and curious child, he had learned to read before age, devouring any printed text

that came to hand. It was burning to go to class like older children, there was so much to learn! In fact, when he was finally old, he spent only one day at school. Put off by the brutality and stupidity that he saw spread there, he fled the second day, when Maytre wanted to force him to give letters with other children his age, without wanting to realize that he was already fluent in reading. His parents had

the common sense not to insist that he go back to school. He spent his childhood in complete freedom, which was for him like the air he breathed:

"First with the goats, then with other animals, I spent childhood frolicking across fields and near the river. I read the little bit that tells me about and dreamed of a fairer and more pleasant life for all. " (*)

Apart from this first attempt, which concluded at the age of six, Félix never set foot in a school or an official teaching institution - at least not as a student! He never cared about acquiring a diploma, educational or other. This does not prevent that from a young age already, he has the passion of education) and even the passion of a school - but of a school worthy of this last name ! He says that this passion was able to develop and grow thanks to the fact of not having been shaped in his young age by the usual school, the school-dressage (**), and moreover, to have nevertheless been able to observe around him his distressing effects on others. It hit him

. "to always see the kids rushing out of school like wild horses. It seemed to me that the school was very bad: if the gamins came out of it with such haste to run, that is that in there we should not be well ... " (***)

Definitely, it should be possible to do much better than that! And when he started his life, he saw it as the most important, the most urgent thing to do.

(*) The preceding quotation, as well as most of those which follow, are taken from the first three chapters of Félix's book on his experience of ecothe self-managed in Barcelona, 184 Vallespir street: "Una experiencia de Education auto-gestionada ", Barcelona 1981. Unless stated otherwise, the following citations are taken from these chapters.

(**) A very similar observation can be made for the unusual life of

Bucke, whose adventurous youth is mentioned in the beautiful introduction (by CM Acklom) to Bucke's widely cited book (see note 74) "Cosmic Consciousness".

(***) Extract from an interview with Félix published in El Pais, issue of 2.0.10.1987, under the title "Félix Carrasquer - an autodidact who gave reality to the dreams of libertarian pedagogy". (I translate, here and elsewhere.)

He was struck by the selfishness and the aggressiveness of the people, including the village boys:

"As I did not receive orders from anyone, since my father worked at the secretariat and I was frolicking alone across fields, I did not have to discharge the aggressiveness accumulated under the authority of the master or the parents. But that

I couldn't understand it yet. Also, I tried in vain to find the reasons for such aggressiveness and such selfishness, and almost always, I thought of the imaginary construction of better organized worlds where people lived. so many would have been happier. Besides, I was growing up in a rereigious (there were parish priests and nuns in the family). So I organized a circle of friends, to show them the greatness of the missionsres and the need to prepare ourselves too, when we are older, to convert the infidels and lead them on the paths of truthtee and love. But immediately Alcolea, Castro, Tomasé and Raimundo raised objections which shook our faith ... "

But if a shoddy religious faith did not last long before the objections of the innate common sense of childhood, this visceral faith in itself, and in a great mission which would be its own, will never leave it. It will not take long to find its own ways to fully deploy there.

At the age of fourteen already, he wanted to learn more than he could learn in the village, and announced to his father his intention to leave for Barcelona.

"My father was not surprised and simply said to me:" since you cannot to study, it is better to learn the trade of baker-pastry maker and when you know it, I will install you a store in the village. "

But Félix's experience in Barcelona was very different, in every way, from what he and his father had imagined, and Félix never became a baker. (When he returned to the village nine years later, it was to bring a different kind of "bread" ...) On the other hand, while earning a living as a patron of the boss other, its horizon in a short time widens tremendously:

"The city and its inhabitants of all kinds offered many attractionstions. But the pole of all my attention was the Atarazanas district with its secondhand bookstores. I discovered countless treasures there. At home, I had already familiarized myself with Cervantès, Pereda „Sainte Thérèse, Quevedo, Valera and some others. Now I'll meet Shakespeare, Dickens,

Voltaire, Zola, Tourguéniev, Gogol, Dostoïevski, Pio Baroja, Azorin, and while browsing again from there I also discovered Proudhon, Pi y Maragal, Malatesta, Anselmo Lorenzo, Ricardo Mella and other sociologists of various trends. "

It was during these years that the foundations of a completely self-taught culture with encyclopedic dimensions were built in Félix. He will continue to hell-improve your life for as long as you like, through readings, conversations, radio broadcasts, reflection - all preserved and made available by a pretty impressive memory. Living culture, which is gradually integratedre in a vision of the world which it also develops and structures in these crucial years of formation and development. The strongly structured vision which then developed, while expanding and deepening over the years, remainsra in its master traits unchanged through the vicissitudes of a long eventful life, rich in joys, sufferings, patience and hope. It was also in these years that her vocation as an educator became clearly aware, and came to take center stage in her life, which she would keep there from now

"When I came across Francisco Ferrer's Modern School, the Decroly method, some information on Pestalozzi and Karchensteiner's school of work, I discovered the vast horizon which finally met my most intimate desires: l education of man.

Society is unjust, inhuman and full of contradiction, I told myself. But without an education to know the world around them and to reveal to them their aspiration for freedom, citizens will never correct their common faults. Despite the revolutionary theories I had just read (*),he me seemed than without a deep chan- gement in the conduct of men, mutual aid and the freedom born would not carried out "(It is me who underlines.)

It is there, it seems to me, the main idea in his life, the one that also motivates his vocation as an educator. At this time of fermentation of minds in Spain, his aspirations were by no means isolated, and in the years that followed, his voice will not cry in a desert, but will awaken warm echoes around him. In the pages where he talks about these ardent years of formation,

(t) I presume that the "revolutionary theories" to which Félix alludes here are not the educational theories and ideas that he has just mentioned, but the libertarian and sociological theories of authors like Proudhon, Malatesta and others which he had quoted in passing just before.

you can feel the generous breath of a great era, an intensely creative era. It will find its culmination, but also its brutal, bloody end, cut with a cleaver (*) with its ultimate episode; the Spanish revolution, and its crushing by the Franco forces (with the blessing of the "democratic" countries what"...).

((104) Félix Carrasquer (2): the boom (**)

But let's listen to Felix again, evoking these feverish and fertile years "In the agitation of my adolescence in Barcelona, there were many people, cultural and political groups, the city, the countryside. But the thirst for an authentic culture, and the imperious desire to propagate it, made me They tormented relentlessly. It was then, at the age of twenty-three, that I decided to return to the village to start the work that met my aspirations.

The dictatorship of Primo de Rivera was drawing to a close (1928), and the difficulties in mobilizing people who could cooperate in an educational work novaThere were many. We nevertheless ended up constituting in the village a legal Cultural Grouping, **duly** domiciled. That's when my friend Justo returned to the village. He had spent a few years in prison following the events of Vera de Bidasoa. In prison he had learned a great deal, and he received with real enthusiasm the constitution of the GroupingCultural.

From our first conversation, he suggested creating a library. It was very easy. I had already brought the thirty or forty pounds in my possesif we ; he added his own, a dozen. And the case was underway! "

(*) This blow of the cleaver did indeed put a brutal and complete end to this intenis creative fermentation, stopped dead for the whole half-century whichfollow* , . Even today, nothing comparable has resumed birth in Spanish soil. And with the crushing (and to a large extent, the failure) of the Spanish Revolution, anarchism has been eliminated from the world scene, until today, as a great force for social transformation. If one day he will find, in one form or another, in Spain or elsewhere, a role comparable to that which was his in Spain in the twenties and thirties, remains in the limbo of the future. I would not be surprised that yes.

(**) Continuation of the previous note "Félix Carrasquer (1) - or hatching of a mission". See note b. from p. (**) page N 423.

But many villagers could not read, or worse, had no need for it. We had to learn to read to some, and stimulate others, or better said, stimulate them all to read, to express themselves, to think about the world that

surrounded them. For that, it was necessary to found a school, with evening courses for children and adults. They welcomed girls and boys, women and men, with a range of ages from six to sixty years, children and adults coming together in the same ardor to learn, understand, express themselves.

"Our working methods? I knew the global Decroly method and we used it for learning to read. As for those who already mastered reading and writing, we invited them to suggest the themes themselves. They drew them from in their daily lives and in their most pressing concerns and needs. At first, they saw us as the holders of the

see, and were waiting for our instructions. But when they understood that there was neither hierarchy nor masters of thought to impose a program, the themes multiplied and, better still, a real dialogue was established.

You could see young people and adults, and with what fascination, discussing social, agrarian, scientific and many other questions.

Only the interests of the group determined the course of the courses. That is to say: one day someone brought a newspaper article to comment on collec- Other times, fertilizers and seeds were treated, or a conflict occurred in the village, whether in work or on matters of common interest. So, whether to learn to read or for other activities, the initiative and the chosen interests always came from the group, and this kept the participants' enthusiasm alive. From the spontaneous expression of the interest of each, we read, wrote, began, and the participants solicited assistance and corrections where they were needed. What could be more natural for those who do not know, and who wants to learn and improve!

In addition to evening classes, the school housed three cultural activities: one theater group, a singing group, and cycles of conferences and anima-evenings, with reading of texts written by the pupils, or of verses which they composed with the naivety inspired by the companion life.

Later, already in the midst of the Republican period and after the people had bought the patrimony of the Duke of Solferino, the Cultural Group considered promote ambitious jets and he realized them: a collective farm, a field of agricultural experimentation, and a school of educational experiences with the participation of boys and girls aged six to fourteen, in an atmosphere of freedom, cooperation and responsibility. "

This first educational experience in the native village, which continues in an atmosphere of intense ideological fermentation and social convulsions, already seems to me to foreshadow the two subsequent educational experiences, giving them the same basic tone: that of freedom, and that of a cooperation complete and fraternal between teachers and students. For Felix, this cooperation was something quite other than a question of "method", as such a technique for learning to read and write, for attracting and fixing the attention of students, etc. It was none other than the most immediate concrete expression, present at all times, of this spontaneous demand for freedom and respect for everyone: respect for what is best in him, and which is not deploys that in an atmosphere animated by such a spirit of freedom and respect.

This fruitful experience continued for five years, between 1928 and 1933, with one or two temporary interruptions due to the turbulent political situation. It ends prematurely under the shock of two unforeseen events occurring back to back. First, in 1932 already, a first retinal detachment at Félix, It was a very hard blow for him. For months, he is condemned to a immobilifull tee. After a healing which will prove to be short-lived, he resumes the task. But the following year a stormy political situation in which he himself was fully engaged (and sometimes recklessly ...) forced him to leave his village in a hurry. He took refuge in Lérida, where that same year (1933) he lost his sight permanently. A terrible test, surely, for this intensely, passionately active man. And in addition, a heavy handicap, worn day after day for a long life. But his revolutionary faith, one with faith in his mission to create and promote by example a new education, did not remain shaken. Today, more than half a century later, in a soft world that is stagnating and falling apart, this faith, and the insane hope that it carries within it,

In Lerida, he met a group of teachers who, inspired by Freinet, had introduced the technique of printing at school to the country. Félix is immediately "captivated" by Freinet's ideas. He manages to interest his younger brother, José, who on his advice had done the Nor Schoolmale. José acquires printing equipment before joining his poste in Huerca, a small village at the foot of the Pyrenees. He will be delighted with his work with the students (*), which he will later leave with regret, for a larger work with Félix.

(*) Félix adds that José's students in Huerca "made them look delighted health school journal, which they called "Simplicity" ". A name that makes you want to read it !

Two years later (in 195), the two brothers and a third, Francisco, will find themselves in Barcelona with their sister Presen, and with the enthusiastic support of a group of new friends, around the project of a "self-managed" school: it's P'Ecole Elysée Recluse from rue Vallespir (*).

Meanwhile Félix had had the opportunity to familiarize himself with pedagogic thinkers of the libertarian current, like Godwin, Saint Simon, Proudhon, Bakounine, Reclus. He takes cognizance of it with enthusiasm when he finds confirmation and nourishment for his own intuitions, but with a critical mind always on the alert (**). But it is, he says, Leon Tolstoy with the educational experience in Yasnala Poliana (the native village of Tolstoi), which had the strongest influence on him. Above all, I believe, he must have felt immense joy, unspeakable exultation. (of which only one who can find an idea can be formed), to find confirmed there, by a great fraternal voice coming from a time and an environment so different, this way that he had already started to spawn his own movement: obscurely, stubbornly, everything in the previous years, with total, absolute confidence, that whispered to him a healthy instinct - the instinct of freedom! This confidence, and this more hidden, silent, invisible and yet secretly faith

(*) I noted that when Félix speaks of this school, he hardly ever calls it by his "official" name, "Ecole Elysée Reclus", but refers to it as "the Vallespir school" (or "from the street Vallespir"). It must not have been entirely satisfied with the name he had chosen, given his serious reservations about Réclus' ideas, like those of Kropotkin and Proudhon, in matters of education. He criticizes them in particular for admitting that the master exercises a conhangs over the pupils and he has the possibility of resorting to punishments. As I specify from the next paragraph, it is -Tolstoy especially who received at Félix a total assent, as far as his educational work at least. I asked him, during our last telephone conversation, why he had not named this school "Leo Tolstoy", he confirmed to me that this was the name which would have been the most natural, but that at this How he was embarrassed by the fact that Tolstoi professed a religious philosophy of life. This seemed to everyone, including Félix, incompatible with Liber aspirationsbe silent about his time; and likewise for Tolstoy's resolutely non-violent options, at a time when we were on the threshold of a revolution which, it seemed then to all, could only be done by resorting to. strength. Now, these ideological reservations of Felix vis-à-vis Tolstoy have greatly diminished, and while claiming himself a vision of the world completely "rationalist" and atheist, he sees in Tolstoi one of the great names of its time which like few others before and even after him had a deep vision of freedom, and, in this spirit, accomplished an educational work of immense significance.

(**) See in particular on this subject the previousisland of

acting, by this meeting received like a sudden influx of new blood. And it was with renewed enthusiasm, with new confidence, that he set out again to discover this path which he felt stretching out before him and which drew him into it powerfully ...

For Tolstoy, as also for his great predecessors Godwin, Fourier, Jlakounine (*), all four far ahead of their time as also on ours, education must be not only "mixed", that is to say reunite boys and girls without distinction, but moreover,

"be completely free from all constraints. The teacher must be a compaignon, working with students to stimulate initiative and critical thinking (**) allowing them to become fully themselves. Only in this way can young people develop independent judgment and their creative inventiveness.

The way was the one opened by Tolstoy, whom I had already instinctively followed. he had to give voice to children, establish a close and sin-
 be between teachers and pupils, and allow the spirit of freedom to permeate everything: school work like manual work, that of the fields and that of harnessing it. And, most of all, the relationships between each and the others ... It was necessary to give young people the management of their own affairs, so that, without constraint or obligation, they develop their multiple interests with a maximum of freedom. "

All this, at random from his readings and his discoveries in books, these were in no way for Félix ideas without more, beautiful utopias. It was indeed a reality, as irrefutable and as crucial in his life as these two legs with which he walked! He had touched her with his finger and grabbed it with both hands, this reality of freedom, day after day, in recent years. And he knew now, not only instinctively, but also

(*) To locate in time these four great precursors of freedom in education, here are the dates: Godwin (1756-1836), Fourier (1772-1837), Bakounine (1814-1876), Tolstoï (1828-1910).

(**) And I would add: by "stimulating the initiative and the critical sense of the pupils", the teacher will also be stimulated by had x. One and the other, stimulate and be stimulated, are actually inseparable and intertwine in a one and the same movement. The sign of the teacher's creative participation in this movement is as much in what he receives from the students as in what he gives them.given...

from experience, that freedom worked. And Tolstoy had already experienced it in the last century thousands of kilometers away - until the Tsarist authorities closed his school to him. And the problem was by no means in the children - children are perfectly capable to live as free beings. (And even adults are, at least in certain places at certain times, when a wind of freedom blows among them ...) The problem comes from adults, and especially teachers. Tolstoy had already seen it! The teacher who, in his childhood, was trained to obey, how would he not be authoritarian, how would he not also train? This is transmitted from generation to generation, from centuries to milléthe age-old atavisms of the herd. How will we ever get out of this vicious circle ?!

But Felix, who had never been trained, felt wings. He had started to leave this fateful circle, the circle of the herd. He felt that he was holding the exit key in his hand, and that he was ready to go further than his great predecessor and elder nor anyone else had gone.

((105) Félix Carrasquer (3): self-managed school, school of freedom (*)

The two educational experiences that Félix considers to be his major experiences consisted in the creation and the animation of two schools which he calls "self-managed". I admit that by itself this term does not have the gift of making my heart beat faster, and rare must be those for whom it is otherwise_ It evokes a "management", something therefore more or less administrative or financial, which would be taken care of by itself (?), or by the principal concerned. I also believe that in political and economic jargon these days, *these* expressions "self-management" or "self-managed" have been put a little, to all sauces. For Félix, they have a very strong, global, demanding meaning. In a collective work "self-managed", the "management" aspect is not but one aspect among many others of a completely different order. And in the case where the common work is a school grouping children and adults, pupils and teachers (and other possible staff), this aspect is far from being the most important.

(*) Continuation of the previous note, "Félix Carrasquer (2):" boom ". See note from b. From p. (**) page N 423.

I had already referred to Summerhill as a "self-managed" school (), in its-giant then, certainly not to management stories (in fact neither the students nor even the staff had to put their noses in finances - it was the reserved domain of the director-owner Neill ...), but because of the assembly of the school, which grouped students and staff without distinction . She was sovereign for all questions concerning relationships between people, internal functioning, internal regulations with the exception however of all what concerns the eternal "programs" and the courses (domain reserved for the masters ...), and the diet and the menu (domain reserved for Madame Neill ...). If Félix heard me call that school "self-managed", that would make him laugh. For him, a self-managed school is a school that belongs to the students (**), first of all, as well as to teachers and staff (second!), and or everything about the school, without any domain served none, is discussed and decided jointly (***) .

(*) In the note "Direct democracy from Makarenko to Neill - or in thistoyen awake the man "(n ° 91), in particular page N 33L1

(**) It is obvious that this term "belongs" is not to be taken here in a formalistic and legal sense - there is of course no question that pupils with a majority of votes are (for example) legally entitled to sell the school, land and equipment and share the sum! This was of course neither the case nor rue Vallespir or Monzon, and whatever. It is a question for the pupils to have the free disposal of all that is in the school, and to be collectively masters of the immediate destinies of this one. The reality that matters here cannot be placed-legally, but psychically.

(***) Each question is "debated and decided in common" by all those concerned by it. When the question concerns all the pupils and staff of the school, the debate takes place in the school assembly, with the participation of all, with equal votes (when a vote is required for lack of unanimity).

When I say "without reserved domain none", it is true as it is for the school of Monzon. For that of rue Vallespir, financially supported by parents under the aegis of the Libertarian Athenaeum Committee in the Corts district (see below), it seems obvious that budgetary questions (like that of myteachers' salaries) were not discussed by the school assembly, but were settled between the adults concerned: the teachers, the parents, and Committee officials. It also seems clear that these questions were devoid of interest for children between six and thirteen, therefore at an age when they themselves did not yet participate in a production contributing to the financial needs of the school. It was not the same at the Monzon school, grouping pupils between fourteen and seventeen years old and supporting themselves, through the work of the pupils.

In deliberations and discussions, the main virtue of the teachings annoying and often the most arduous (I suspected as much, and Félix has just confirmed it to me on the phone ...), it is to know is to hush up. This is the kids above all to express themselves, to fathom themselves, to invent, to take responsibility - whereas everywhere else and before coming there, they were trained to listen to grown-ups and to obey. In the school of Félix (*), it is a whole psychic mechanic which must be managed once and for all fully commit, both children and adults. More mora authority the one of an adule is great (that of Félix let's say, or that of Neill at Summerhill), and the more it is important that he restrains himself, that he knows how to close it - that he speaks last, or even not at all. And after all, even if he felt that a decision that the kids concocted among themselves is not the most judicious, it is well worth it for them to experience it, and if necessary, that they learn from their mistakes, Better still come to an impractical decision (on the which it will not take long to return, educated by experience), only to a "perfect" solution blown by the adult, and adopted automatically by children who trust in their knowledge and their experience...

In the schools run by Félix, it was rare that there was a need for votes, even with a hundred participants. Most often, after a discuseveryone agreed, and it was awarded. In case of differencesof opinion, there is a vote by equal vote - the voice of the six-year-old skunk, if that interests him to participate in the vote, on a par with that of Felix. (As was also the case for Neill at Summerhill.) It will not be uncommon for a proposal from Félix (or Neill) to be rejected. The reverse would be badgo sign! Anyway, the most important thing is not what is the decisiontaken - at least, as long as it is taken in a spirit of fairness. (And the unchecked child has a delicate and sure sense of justice ...) The important thing, is to learn freedom. And truth be told, adults as much as children have to do this learning ...

But in the "self-managed school" as Félix understands, there is no reserved area where the child would not have a say. It is not an oven where he is pampered, but a mirai-universe in which he fully participates, assuming all the responsibilities (varying according to his age and degree of development) that he wishes to assume. And the spirit that reigns in this universe which is totally his, where he really is, totally in he encourages this spontaneous desire

(* This same observation is equally valid for the Summerhill school in Neill, obviously.

to assume its responsibilities (without at any time making it an obligation, even tacit). A kid of six or seven years, it is rare that he will be interested in questions of "management" precisely - on the other hand the acquisition of new school material will not fail to interest him, and he will have his word to say.

But surely the most important question in school, which interests all children without exception, is what that we y will do, and How? 'Or' What we the will do. What do you want to learn What

what we want to do And once something started, how could it follow, and how to work together (or play together ...), whether it is more or less theoretical work with books and written notes, or travail in the workshop. Or, in the countryside, working in the garden, or in the fields. Or, in boarding school, work in the kitchen, serving vice at the table, cleaning ... As the child grows, he also learns to match his spontaneous desires or his more lasting desires, with the material tasks required by the friendliness, more substantial tasks in boarding school regime, but which exist in all cases. In the two self-managed schools run by Félix, it would not have been a question (not even, of course, if they had the financial means galore!) To call on highly skilled laborborn for domestic tasks. Children; from the smallest to the largest, in the company of the adults when these were not taken elsewhere, ensured this travail as a matter of course. These were not chores that would have been asked of them by anyone. These were things they did for themselves, in a place where they were at home like they were nowhere elsewhere. Even the cleaning of the premises was done every day and with good humor. You have to believe that when there is no adult behind to force them to be clean and careful, the kids when they have their own house, they like it to be beautiful. For themselves I think, and also (if we can really separate the two) from the outside world - they like to be proud of their kingdom, which reflects nothing more or less than they are.

To return to what is commonly regarded as the *raison d'être* of the school, the famous "courses". In self-managed schools, there are no programs for such a school year, nor a pre-established range of courses, which the teachers share according to their skills, and which they would comfortably confine themselves to repeating each year ⁽¹⁰⁹⁾! If they seek comfort, their place is not the ! For Félix (as we have already seen in the previous note in his work in Albalate, his native village), "cooperation" between teacher and student is not an empty word. In working together, it is the student as much as the teacher, after all, who is directly and vitally concerned, who truly "does" with him

"course" (if you can still call it that). He's just fair, he's even indistinkable for an "active" learning in the full sense of the term (that is to say for learning that is creative ...), that the student has a say in the same way as the teacher, on all that concerns this common work.

In Albalate (in the years 1928-33), where everyone had known each other for a long time and where Félix himself was a "country", starting up the school in this spirit of cooperation was no problem. It is that, undoubtedly, which gave Félix this foundation of unshakable confidence, this intimate knowledge that cooperation in school, that was walking, and that was it and nothing else, true freedom at school. This assurance was not too much for the start of school in Barcelona in 1935:

"At first the kids were lost, they didn't know what to do. It takes a lot of guts so as not to be led to dictate: we do this or that, in this or that way ... But ultimately the children themselves choifeel. I am sure that as long as someone directs, dictates at school, there is no freedom - neither at school nor elsewhere ... "(*)

For four days the kids were waiting for the adults to take the direction of operations, and we don't talk about it anymore! It must have been days of inner panic for them, a world that suddenly collapsed - adults, and their school teachers what is more, who refuse to order! Félix luiyil was not afraid, he too was waiting: for it to happen ... On the fourth day, a little girl whose mother worked in a weaving factory, she wanted to know how it works, a loom. After that, it was won - the barrage of fear was overwhelmed by an influx of curiosity - the work had started!

This was the first of two self-managed schools, the Elysée Reclus school, rue Vallespir in Barcelona. It only operated during the 1935/36 school year because it was interrupted by the Civil War. It was almost one infamily business, since the four permanent masters were the three Félix brothers, José, Francisco, and their sister Présen who (assisted by her indispensable piano, most appreciated and especially by the little ones) looked after the youngest children. There were a hundred children between the ages of six and thirteen in the working class district of Les Corts. The premises were rather cramped for so many children. When we prepared the premises, José and others were a little worried

(*) Citation extracted from the article already cited in El Pais - see note b. from p. (***) page N 428 in the note "Félix Carrasquer (1): hatching of a misif we".

Yasnaïa Poliana, Tolstoy he could walk with the same all day longborn, in the countryside! However, that did not prevent these proletarian kids from feeling at home there. They were kings and lords like nowhere their, even if the square meter was measured! For them it was not a school, it was their home. Nobody was forcing them to go, or to participate in collective occupations, and they knew it. But that would have made them laugh, that we asked them if they did not prefer to stay with their

parents (to be ordered?) or stroll in the street (and for what to do?), or, in their kingdom, yawn with crows while everyone is busy laugh! There is not one of them all year round who came up with the idea of not going "to class". It was rather the opposite: in the evening at six o'clock, when in principle the school day was over and the teachers had gone to eat, there were still a good number of them who continued to work, at work in

train, at the printing press, or strumming on the piano or whatever. Between eight and ten in the evening, the school received teenagers from the neighborhood, those above thirteen who were interested in coming, and even adults. So we had to tidy up the "regulars of the day" a bit to make room for the cooler breads. They laughed and came back quietly - it was only a postponement.

The world overturned, in short! Or would it not be rather the world to which we are all used, which would be the "overturned" world, the world of a strange delirium?

This school operated under the patronage of the Liberté Athénée Committee from the Corts district (*). It was the committee that was responsible for collecting the financial participation from parents for operating costs. Once the building is acquired and the equipment on site, it is essentially limited to the emoluments of the four full-time teachers, surely not crazy sums.

As for relations with the parents of the pupils, this was a key issue for the school. Once the ice broke with the children, it was not from them that problems would happen. Not once during this memorable year, nor later at the Monzon school which will be discussed, there were fights between children, whether or not there were teachers present. Amazing maybe, but true (*)! On this side, it was perfect. But

(*) In Spain in the thirties, the "athénées" were cultural associations, often of libertarian inspiration, which gauged a great role in the ideological fermentation in these years. Each district of Barcelona had its "libertarian atheist", whose cultural and even political role (did I believe I understandre) in the life of the neighborhood was considerable.

(**) Where and how was the aggression emanating from these children released?

during their existence, and surely suffered in their entourage in those years also? Eh in any case, it was not discharged at school I I come back again to this kind of miracle, in the subsequent note "Félix Carrasquer (5): ou le temps des moissons" (n ° 107), in particular page N 454456.

.Félix knew that it would not be possible for them to teach freedom to children, without at the same time teaching parents, and even all adults in the neighborhood; Dai this school, supposedly for children from six to thirteen, it was in the full sense of the term 1 school of neighborhood - including that of adolescents and adults. Many of them came to the evening classes from 8 to 10, already mentioned, always crowded. In addition, once a month, there was a special teacher meeting with the parents, and yet another meeting with the same and the participation of children. The hardest part was getting parents to admit that their children, since that they go to this school where they feel at home, begin to criticize them. Learning freedom is also (and perhaps even, above all) learning to conface pride and vanity in ourselves and our repressed aggressiveness, which tend to dominate our behavior, neither seen nor known. This is why criticism is often unbearable to us, and even more so when it is based. But there is no freedom in the country, no justice, no revolution worthy of the name, as long as we, parents and adults, relet's hear the truth coming out of our children's mouths.

The extraordinary thing (and which gives the measure of a great era) is that in these public confrontations, we have managed to make parents that it was important that they accept that children criticize them freeis lying. Children who fear to criticize their parents (verbally, or even in their hearts only), this will make adults who fear their masters, and who accept their domination slavishly. At one of the first sessionsthes in common with the parents and the children, one of the young pupils rose boldly, in front of two or three hundred people assembled, to explain that his father had hit him because he had not executed immediately , when he asked him to go buy tobacco for him. Félix tells me that this act of courage made an extraordinary impression on everyone who was there. Something must have "passed" then, which those who attended and who are still alive, must surely still remember today ...

Every Sunday, weather permitting, there was a school excursion, bringing together teachers and pupils who wished, often with friends of their own and their families. (No Sunday rest for the tireless

masters school, in these years of sowing at full load t) It was an opportunity to meet all in a particularly pleasant and detense. There have been up to a thousand families who have found themselves like this at

green ; practically the whole district of Corts. Don't ask me for details on stewardship issues for this memorable one-day migration. The school had become the ferment at the same time as the symbol of a collective identity of the district, and of a new spirit which had been blowing for two decades or three and who had found, around this hundred young children among them, its most concrete and most striking spontaneous expression.

Félix at that time had been blind for two years already. I know him well enough to know that that did not prevent him from being the soul, discreet certainly but omnipresent, of this adventure daring in common (*). In default of his eyes, now he had to manage to see with his hands and his ears. But above all, surely, to do with the eyes of the heart ...

The second self-managed school created and run by Félix is the "Ecole des Militants de Monzon". It is a school in a rural area, in Aragon, during the two years of war between January 1937 and January 1939. This time it was older boys and girls, between fourteen and seventeen years old, living together in a regime of 'boarding school. Their number varies between forty and sixty. Félix is the only adult among them: it's war I During these two years, many of the older boys go to the front, others are asked by the community for administrative and administrative tasks. organization in the hinterland. New students come to replace them. About two hundred students go to school in this way. So a lot of traffic, sign of Aragon is then divided into twenty-five agrarian communities (or "Comarcals"), grouping 601 collectivized villages comprising 300,000 peasant families who have opted for libertarian collectivization (**). Among these communities, there are

(*) One can wonder here to what extent, once well launched, this "daring adventure in common" was still suspended in the person of Félix, and if she could have continued without him in case, for one reason or another, he had not participated in the said adventure. We hope so ...

(**) This extraordinary collective experience is, it seems, very little connaked, lack of period documents, and authentic testimonies on this episode by coactors. For a detailed account, I refer to Félix's book "Las Colectividades de Aragon - un Vivir autogestionado Promesa de Futuro", Laia / Divergencias editions, Barcelona 1986.

to that of Monzon, grouping 32 villages, the most important of which is Monzon. The school buildings (the former residence of a colonel, requisitioned by the community), with a garden and land, were made available to the school by the Comarcal de Monzon, plus cattle, agricultural and other equipment, a nest egg for the acquisition of educational material in Barcelona, finally delighted cutting guaranteed for so many months. With that for them to manage

The aim of the school is to train young people with a spirit of initiative and responsibility, to provide administrative and organizational tasks required by the needs of collectivisation. Each of the 32 villages du Comarcal sent one or two young people, even three, deemed suitable for this type of work (*). More often than not, it is boys who are chosen, Félix may insist that there are about as many boys as girls. These will be clearly in the minority. Most of these young people were no longer going to school, they were sent directly from the fields (so to speak) to the school of militants.

There was no difficulty getting started with them in Monzon. The great revolutionary events which took place around them had surely matured them and put them in tune with a new spirit. They knew that they came to the Monzon school not to obey and carry out orders, but to learn there "on the job" to make use of their own faculties, in contact with each other, both in the study of more or less theoretical questions than in the tasks domestic ches, or in the fields, in the garden, in workshops, and for management work. Each student participated in all of this work, including management work, entrusted to a Management Committee which is renewed in rotation.

Very quickly, thanks to its agricultural production, the school was able to support the entire relies to its own needs. Considering the very tight conjuncture, this was an important thing, from the material point of view certainly, but even more, undoubtedly, from the psychological point of view. So much so that with the hindsight of half a century, Félix write to me

(*) Of course, considering the numerous precedents, the idea is essential that, in the case where the revolutionary forces had prevailed in Spain, this "School of Militants de Monzon "risked playing the role of" nursery "for a new" revolutionary aristocracy "(sic), taking the place of the previous" elites "which it would have replaced. I do not know if the collectivist structures put in place then, and especially the spirit of the population who presided over it, automatically excluded this (or at least made it improbable) this kind of derailment, so common for a revolution ...

The most important of the Monzon experience (*) is that with three hours agricultural work for everyone, we supported our economic needs. That is to say, if our type of school becomes general, we will save thousands of billions and trillions spent on education that dumbers young people, and they will learn to really combine practice and theory into cooperative and enriching know-how for all. "

The school even had surplus production, which they were proud of. see send to the front. This efficiency was undoubtedly due to the good understanding and the enthusiasm of the pupils, but also to methods of exploitations mothey were the first to introduce into the region. (It was at a time when nobody suspected yet where these amazing methods were going toto lead agriculture ...)

For a school which includes the usual range of ages, from the age of five or over, there is little question that it could support itself by economically productive child labor . But few does matter - after all, the raison d'être of a school, and for Félix less than for anyone, is to be "profitable" economically. If (as I do not doubt for a moment) humanity survives, and if moreover it continues (as it seems to me the least probable) to entrust a part of the education of its children and its teenagers to schools, it will find well and even as a priority, to the fullest extent necessary, the means to provide for their needs, without thinking of complaining about its millions. What if (as I have no doubt) the extraordinary experience of Félix and the kids of the rue Vallespir and the young people of the school of Monzon must one day inspire other men to make their schools which will meet the needs of their time and the ambient context, this certainly not for economic reasons, but because it responds to the same deep aspirations in them as those which had animated Félix by creating the work, and all those, children and adults, who participated in it.

The Monzon school was founded for the immediate needs of a relibertarian evolution in rural areas, but surely also in a long-term vision which, alas, never happens. When Aragon fell, in April 1938,

(*) You should probably not take this statement too literally over the pen. As I suggest below, Félix will surely find in the experience of the Monzon school more crucial aspects than the economic aspect.that he puts forward here.

the school was hastily transferred to Catalonia, near Barcelona (*), with some of the former pupils, to whom other pupils from the host region joined. It was dissolved at the last hour, at the time of the final debacle, in January 1939. Félix passed in extremis in France, in the very days that followed. (Four years of concentration camps await him there - the price to pay to escape the firing squad ...) A good number of the pupils of Monzon had fallen at the front. His brother José too (the one who had been the first to assist him, to found the school on rue Vallespir ...). Other students in the vague of repression which followed the debacle, are shot.

Yet there are some who survived, who live today and who remind. Over the years, after Franco's death and when the police regime gradually relaxed, Félix met around thirty. And alumni from rue Vallespir too. These children and adolescents of yesteryear are today between sixty and seventy years old, men and women at the evening of their life. From what Felix tells me, I understand that the seed that was sown in them is not dead. The steamroller of forty years of repress the police force was powerless to smother it. Even today, they know (as they had surely already felt it once, children ...) that in these apparently distant years, at the school rue Vallespir and that of Monzon, they had the chance to live a very great adventure - a great adventure of the mind. And I am sure that many of their children and their grandchildren to whom they spoke about it (those who dared to believe them ...), know it too. And perhaps in these at least, in these old people and in these men and women in the prime of life and in these children who come into existence, live from now knowledge of other something that surrounds them; and with it, a very precious secret expectation ...

(*) The reason to install the school near Barcelona was above all (explains Félix to me) a reason of propaganda, to be able to show to distinguished foreign visitors to Barcelona this school like no other, as a professional example of "revolutionary achievement".

((106) Félix Carrasquer (4): freedom-Summerhill and freedom-Vallespir-Monzon (*)

To my previous letter (**), where I spoke to him enthusiastically about Neill, Félix replied a bit sarcastically:

I learned about Neill's experience when I was in France, in 1965, when we were silent about his book on "France Culture". I have had to comment on his experience on various occasions (especially at the University), when, exposing our experience of self-management in Vallespir, some teachers- Not very intuitive sisters tell me that my experience is a bit like that of Summerhill. Neill's school is a nice example of "freedom" (with guillemets), because where there is no responsibility there can be no authentic freedom. Holding on to what Neill himself confesses, when he explains that the children do not help him to cultivate his vegetable garden and that he will lock up his carpentry tools so that it is not dilapidated it is easy for me to reply that it is absurd and antilibertaire to expect the kids to help him, owner of the vegetable patch and equipment (***). In Monzon, where the vegetable patch, production and tools belonged to the kids (****), they invested their share of work with enthusiasm and they were very careful with their tools, like things his who are theirs. "

(*) Continuation of the previous note, "Félix Carrasquer (3): the self-managed school, school of freedom". See note b. by p. (**-) page N 423.

(** \) Letter dated 27.11.87. It was written shortly before I reread Neill's book "Free Children of Summerhill", and after the first note where it is a mention of Neill, "Mutants (3) a wind of justice and freedom" (n ° 88).

(***) The way Neill talks about his Summerhill experience, without at all times making a mystery of the difficulties he could not fail to encounter in his delicate task, never has the tones of a "confession" (as conceded to regret ...), but is always perfectly candid and spontaneous. I don't know if he "expected" that the kids would help him in the vegetable patch (a wait, after all, human, even if it is "absurd and anti-balanced"). But what matters above all is that even when his expectations are disappointed (surely the most frequent thing), his self-esteem is not offended and his relationship with the children is not disturbed. It is in this especially that I see in him a great educator, who has much to teach us.

(****) There is no reason to take the term "belonged" here in a too formalistic sense. Compare with note from b. from p. (**) page N1437 in the previous note. It is undeniable that the places "belonged" to the children of the school on rue Vallespir or in Monzon, in a much more complete sense than was the case at Summerhill.

It is sure that there was rue Vallespir and in Monzon a "libertarian breath" a creative impulse, probably unique in the history of the school, and that we dearwould cherish Summerhill in vain. The places and times, decidedly, were not the same. In England from the thirties to today (*), and even in choosing an environment less stuffed than the bourgeois environment in which Neill was confined, I am not sure that even Félix, with his own genius and the libertarian flame which animates him, would have succeeded in causing a great collective educational adventure, as the one he lived and animated in the ten or eleven years between 1928 (when he returned to Albalate for his first educational experience) and January 25, 1939 (when the debacle of the Spanish Revolution ends the experiment-rience of the Monzon School).

Yes, in Félix's educational adventure there is a dimension of collective epic, absent from Summerhill and no doubt from any other educational experience.-tive until today still (**), Yet (and no offense to Felix!) I see a different dimension certainly, but no less unique and just as irremplaceable, in Summerhill. It is a dimension of depth in Neill's vision and in his work as an educator and child therapist, tirelessly continuing over forty years; a dimension that Felix's work could not have, even supposing that there were in him the latent dispositions which, in Neill, were going to develop into a sort of gift of psychological clairvoyance to read in the psyche of children . To each his eventtail of donjons it is up to him to let grow and develop, to each his mission. And happy is he who, in the short journey of a human life and without sparing himself, was able to carry to the end a mission which he did totallyhis.

This depth in Neill's work and the daring spirit it requires, Félix had well felt in the sixties, I remember it well. He had spoken to me about it then, to me who still saw only fire in it, at the same time as he mentioned certain fairly obvious limitations of Summerhill (which I myself had felt). But perhaps he forgot it, absorbed that he had been, in the twenty years that have passed since then, to make people feel

(*) I believe that what I say there on England, would also be valid for any other country in the world, with the sole exception of Spain during the twenties and thirties.

(**) Perhaps, with regard to the "dimension of epic" (sweat that of freedom), I should make exception of the "Maxime Gorki Colony" of Makarenko, in the first years of the colony. This adventure was discussedteaching in the note "Direct democracy from Makarenko to Neill" (n ° 91).

restive minds, wherever he has the opportunity, a dimension of freedom which he is still one of the very few to feel fully, for having discovered and lived it himself, and for having seen it live fully_

I also see a convergence between the two works, and whatever Today Félix is a convergence towards freedom. Each

in his own way, one and the other, Neill and Félix, sowed the
libert.

Like before them men like Walt Whitman, Pierre Kropotkine,

Edward Carpenter, Sigmund Freud and others sowed it, and (after those) a Teilhard de Chardin, a Krishnamurti (*), a Marcel Légaut, or a Solvic sowing his young life under the fire of the peloton - each sowing "freedom" in his own field, which life has assigned to him. This freedom is not total, it is not all freedom, in none of these men, nor in any other who ever lived. Because the sower himself, even animated by a passion for freedom, is not completely free. He is a man, and as such bound in a hundred ways, that he

more or less clearly, or not. His seeds are men's seeds, and the field he sows, no matter how large, is limited. It is through the harvests that other men will be able to raise there after him, and that they will in turn sow in new and larger seeds, than these limits of man for will be and will be constantly overwhelmed and repelled ...

To my question on the attitude towards sex at the Monzon school, Félix answers as follows:

"Regarding sex, I would say that, as it was a country area traditional customs, and that moreover we lived a revolution which demanded our full participation in the social and economic actions of the people, there was in us a spontaneous asceticism. We were talking about the sex problems as simple as the digestive system or hygiene; but he there was no problem and there was mutual respect and cooperation between young people of both sexes: study work, agricultural work, cleanliness of the premises, table service etc - everything being organized and decided in the assembly which met whenever it was needed, without formality or protocol "

(*) For Krishnamurti, it is understood that I limit myself here to the few three or four years in which he was faithful to his mission (finally interview ...), before he slipped into the "épaté" and did not sow freedom, but a lot of confusion if we.

Of course, Félix knows like me that even speaking of sex with as much simplicity as the digestive tract, he does not play the same role in existence, and does not pose quite the same problems! And his testimony which I quote just reminds us that there are privileged moments in the life of a person or that of a whole community (such as that of Monzon during the two short years of its existence), transient moments, where these "problems" go into the background and seem to be gone. This only prevents the millennial chain of the repression of sex, this omnipresent chain in human existence (*) (and in this "country region with traditional customs" as much as anywhere else!), does not fade overnight, by virtue of a breath of enthusiasm and freedom, in the wake of a generous (and cruel, and bloody ...) revolution. It's here even chain which binds the so-called "masters" and the "slaves", which makes them both equally strangers to themselves, equally slaves of the same atavisms of the Herd. And it binds the teachers who teach no less than the students.

It is starting to wear out a little, this invisible chain, at least in our countries. But it still remains strong, and heavy to wear, even if rare are those who feel and measure its weight. The most beautiful libertarian impulse, the most

(*) I remember that it was Felix himself who first made me understand the crucial role of this chain in human existence, I no longer remember on what occasion. He told me (roughly) that the man or woman who was free and without shame secreted in his sex, never there would not accept being dominated by anyone - a_i 5 he would have no master! It struck me a lot. This thought sown then by Félix has worked a lot in me in the twenty or five years that have passed since. I do not in any way have the impression of having yet reached the end of history, and in particular of having grasped the meaning and the role of sexual repression, in the long history of our species. (I touch on this question in the two notes "Presence and contempt of God - or the double human enigma" and "Neill and original sin - or myth as a message", n's 41 and 90.)

I take this opportunity to point out that Félix is one of the men in my life who, for a few years, were clothed for me with a certain "authority", from the fact that I felt in them a knowledge or a maturity which made me were lacking, and that I knew instinctively that I had to learn from them something that I had to learn. This feeling, I believe, rarely deceived. And I also believe that more often than not I ended up learning to contact what they had to teach me. After which, this tacit "aura" of authority with which they had been invested for me vanished, and the bond which bound me to them also tended to loosen considerably. This loosening of the bond is undoubtedly linked to the fact that the main driving force in my life is not love or affection (as it was the case for example in the life of Edward Carpenter), but the thirst for knowledge, and the choice and evolution of my relationships with others are to a very large extent subordinated to this drive for knowledge in me.

radical cultural revolution, will not make it fall apart without taking alone-

worth watching! It will take patient and obstinate work, work of generations and centuries if not of millennia, so that the chain finally breaks and breaks up and that we leave it behind us, a clumsy and strange vestige of a very long and painful journey_

This neuralgic aspect of human slavery, an occult aspect, rarely recognized even today, is practically invisible in the Monzon school as in Vallespir. "There was no problem" ... But it is 1 ui very precisely, on the contrary, which is the subject of all Neill's attention! Half a century of patient, intense, delicate and loving attention. Like a solitary prisonerre tirelessly begins, with a frail nail file, one of the heavy massive rings of its chain. Because he knows that the chain that connects one connects all, and that he has eternity before him.

In my reflection on Neill's work, in early December, I noted a certain complementarity between Neill's mission and that of Kropotkin (forty-one years older than his). There is however a complementarimuch narrower and more striking between the mission of Félix (twenty-two years younger, than Neill). Like Kropotkin, Félix claims to have an "anarchist" or "libertarian" worldview, and he has been a tireless luttor for the ideals of social justice and freedom, conceived from a libertarian perspective. But while Kropotkin only touched on educational questions in a theoretical and epidermic way, these were at the heart of Félix's mission no less than that of Neill. Coming to underline the dimension of the work of Neill absent from that of Félix, the remarkable thing is that conversely the work of Félix comes to fill perfectly the major gaps which we note in that of Neill. I can see three of them now, which it may be worth remembering and putting side by side.

1 °) The relative passivity of the role of pupils in own teachingsaid. Aside from the bold innovation of not forcing children to go to class when they don't want it, Neill just follows suittraditional dele of the master who knows, transmitting a knowledge fixed in advance to pupils who ignore (110).

2 °) The non-participation of children in domestic work and other necessities by collective life, work which in Summerhill is supported by paid staff. By a visibly distorted idea of the "happiness" of

children (*), their life at Summerhill (until the age of seventeen when they leave school) is divided exclusively between studies on the one hand, and on the other hand

play and recreational activities (theater, workshops ...), including disoutside pull-ups paid by pocket money more or less provided by the parents.

This is perhaps the most obvious "oven" aspect: the child is relieved (and in truth deprived) of some of the simplest and most basic responsibilities, normally part of common life family or collective. From this fact and more, he gets used to a life of being privileged, served, for the tasks considered by mutual agreement as "inferior" or "servile", by personnel in a way subordinate.

This is most evident in the case of children living in school/as was the case at Summerhill (so-called "boarding school" scheme). But even in a school where the children only stay during the day and where they do not take their meals (as was the case on rue Vallespir), there are always small tasks posed by conviviality. Insofar as for children the school is truly "their kingdom" (and not a prison, nor a luxury hotel ...), it is for them a pleasure and a thing that goes without saying that to take charge of these tasks like adults who share places with them and who participate too.

3 ') Neill's concern to keep students, even the oldest, away from the major problems of their time, including those that they cannot help but face in their own lives; or at least, the concern to avoid it being discussed in the school between the pupils and the teachers.

This is the second "oven" aspect, a month that seems at first glance but inseparable from the previous one (which rests on the tacit acceptance of social inequalities, as being something that would go without saying). Of course, this exclusive

(*) As I had already suggested in the reflection on the work of Neill, this "visibly distorted idea of the happiness of children" in Neill is surely due to the bad memory left in him by the chores in his childhood which were imposed on him by the adults around him. So he finds it difficult to imagine that domestic work could be something more than a reluctantly done chore for a child. This is one example among many that myHowever, even the greatest educator is not, and up to and including caught up in his conception of education, liberated completely from *his* own conditions, above all from the education he himself received. As for why one frees oneself during such existence from such conditioning, and why one continues on the other hand to be a prisoner of such others during his whole life, that is for me a great mystery ...

would be impossible to maintain if the students themselves decided over and over again sure, with the assistance of the masters, the themes they wish to work on are themselves which would not be long in putting on the carpet many of the quest that Neill would like to see avoided. The reason he gives is his scrupulous one not to "influence" the pupils, scruples of which I already discussed. (*). But in truth, it is unrealistic on the part of an educator to pretend not to influence, and all the more so since his action is more fruitful. And there is a margin between the leaching of skull generally practiced, qué school, and the absensystematic teism recommended by Neill. In this case, by this absenteemysself, Neill exerts an undeniable action, more effectively perhaps than by a speech: he installs in the children of Summerhill a kind of "ideology of happiness", for the use of himself, his relatives and his gang. Neill believed in this ideology, at least for the kids entrusted to his care, even if he did not apply it at all (and fortunately!) To his life_It seems to me a bit like the ideological counterpart of the facility which consists to spare the kid the alleged "chore" of making his bed, by calling on domestic staff. Reasonable for the small child, this ideology becomes more and more deficient as the child grows. This deficiency, I see it above all in the deliberate absence of any spiritual dimension, and noespecially that of responsibility vis-à-vis larger human communities due to the more or less immediate entourage, and (ultimately) vis-à-vis all of humanity (**).

These three "major gaps" in Summerhill that I have just mentioned consist all try in a lack of responsibility of children and adolescents, in three different fields which obviously concern them, and sometimes crucially. This is what makes Félix say, with reason, that "without responsibility there can be no authentic freedom". I would only add, in this regard, that in comparison with what is still common today in schools or in families, the responthe children of Summerhill were not overlooked geable, quite the contrary, even if it remained confined to a fairly limited area. But in comparison to the responsibility that was deployed so vigorously

0 See the note "Education without suggestion? - or education and self-knowledge", n ° 93.

(**) See the note cited in the previous note to b. from p. as well as the two notes that follow it, "Neill and the bomber - or happiness-to-galore and the other dimension ", and " Summerhill - or the oven, and the open sea ... ".

at rue Vallespir or at Monzon, it must be recognized that that of the "free children of Summerhill" looks a bit anemic like a greenhouse plant, and this all the more so as the children are older.

((10?) Félix Carrasquer (5): harvest time (*)

The observations made and reported by both Neill and Félix are completely reliable for me at no time did I have the impression at neither in the other of an advantageous presentation, to embellish a table (with, of course, the best faith in the world ...). It is obviously not the kind of one or the other. I have no more doubts about it at Neill, which I have not had the advantage of knowing personally as I know Félix. But there is, in his story as in that of Felix, an "air of reality" that does not deceive not. Neill makes no secret of his mistakes, the difficulties he had to overcome, or these failures.

In this regard, I note, moreover, that Neill's observations and those of Félix do not meet. For Summerhill students, it usually took weeks, sometimes months or even (in some extreme cases) years, before a newcomer child found himself in the complete mood. very different from Summerhill; let him understand that this is a place where he is accepted as he is, without having to bow to a role or getting tired of taking the opposite view. It was only then that he finally became himself, at the same time that he became part of this community of equals who welcomed him as he was, without ever judging him. But to get there, it was first necessary that the aggressiveness and hatred accumulated in him in an atmosphere repressive and devoid of love, discharges in such or such other ways, often disconcerting and sometimes dangerous until he re-finds its plate and its naturalness, in an environment itself benevolent and naturalrel. There were also some cases of failure, where despite all the efforts, the child remained irreducibly unsocial, and where Neill was forced to send him back to his parents.

What is striking in Felix's story, however, is that he never found himself confronted with such difficulties. If I didn't know him

(*) Continuation of the previous note. See note b. from p. (**) page N 423.

close, to be sure that he is not a man to fabricate or even to present gray facts in pink, I would have had good reasons to be skeptical. But I know, no doubt possible, that I can take his tale for cash. However, these kids at rue Vallespir and in Monzon, they too like all of us, they had had to accept since their childhood, both in their family and in the school where they were before, assaults of all kinds, due to incomgrit, fear, selfishness and aggressiveness of adults around them. What then became of this long-accumulated aggressiveness? Félix tells us that she did not show up at school. Not only is there not a single fight in these schools, between 1928 (in Albalate) and late 1938 (in Monzon), but there was, he tells us, a good permanent cordial understanding, in a busy and happy hive atmosphere. It almost sounds too good to be true. Especially when you have already spent (like me) a long life trying to get to know human nature! However, Félix is not a man to be mistaken about an atmosphere either - his nose is thin enough to feel when around him it gets stuck.

Where does this amazing difference between children's psychology come from? - Summerhill, and children - Vallespir or Monzon? Is it the difference of backgrounds

children from wealthy backgrounds being more deeply disturbed by the education received, being more deprived of love, more disoriented in a more artificial environment, that the children of the workers of the district of Corts in Barcelona, or those of the campesinos of the area of Monzon? But such a draconian difference?

Or is it due to the exceptional era in which Félix's educational experience takes place? Félix himself realizes how much this harmony between the spirit of the school and the parents' dispositions (and even those of the whole district or of the rural region in which the school was inserted), was a something extraordinary, almost incredible too, which may not have existed anywhere else at any time. At Summerhill, Neill tells us that most children were constantly divided between the spirit that reigned in school, and that which they found in their families and in the rest of

the society. This was the case throughout the life of Summerhill. In addition, this school has always remained a foreign body, culturally speaking, in the land where it was located. Such conflicts were totalment absent in the three educational experiments carried out by Félix between 1928 and 1938.

I would tend to think that the huge difference noted earlier comes from 1 to, and not from the difference of the ambient environments by themselves

(whether in the parental environment, or in that formed by the school), or the difference in "pedagogical approaches" in Neill and in Félix. I believe that the true cause is indeed to be found in this powerful imponderable that is the "spirit of the times". Yes, the Spirit was blowing in Barcelona and in Aragon in the thirties. The great adventure of Félix and the children at Vallespir and Monzon was carried by this powerful breath and it testified to this breath, come who knows where.

Those who lived May 68, or who participated in the counterculture movement in the decade that followed, know that there are things "or" unthinkable "which, at certain times and as by some strange effect of grace, not only become possible and are done, but which moreover appear then the simplest and most natural things of the world. Yes, what would take place in France in May 68, and all that was started by this strange convulsion in the decade which followed (so this time more or less marginal but on the other hand, almost everywhere in the world ...), is in many ways very different from what fermented and which was sought in the Spanish people about forty years earlier, and which found an astonishing culmination * during the Spanish Revolution before sinking into the blood. But in both episodes of our long March forward, beyond the action of individuals and giving it power and resonance, we feel this same great Breath coming from elsewhere.

When I try to imagine the Renewal that is before us a little bit, hanging on as best I can to what is known to me in this effort to apprehend the Total Unknown of tomorrow – these are these two great episodes of our history which now come to mind. There have surely been countless similar moments in the development of peoples over the millennia; great creative convulsions that came about, we don't know why or how and that no one could have predicted. They gave birth to the myths and religions and the great new visions of man and the universe, and the great hopes arisen from the resignations of long ago, and the faceless and nameless aspirations, elusive and poignant like the dream! But these are the two episodes that are closest to me, for having felt their breath a little bit and for being recognized as my heir. And now that a breath of things to come has also come on me, these two "moments of strength" of formerly foreshadow for me, "in quality" everything

at least and oh how modestly! The great Mutation of Time that awaits. The hour is now close to the Storm and the torrential waters of the Ondée. Then will be the time of the Great Creative Breath. The same breath, assured but coming this time to sweep the whole earth and overthrow the dead and awaken the living.

Then will come the Hour of the Harvest, finally, and the time of: news Sowing.

It is not the place here to dwell on the details of the school on rue Vallespir or on the school of Monzon, and their short and rich history. Felix took care to make a detailed account of both, as well as a third account, intimately linked to the previous ones, on the great collective adventure of the agrarian communities in Aragon, during the two years of the Spanish Revolution. This is, I believe, the only moment in the history of peoples where the libertarian ideal of cooperation and popular solidarity, without hierarchy or constraint, was lived on the scale of a vast province, by men, women, children, united and carried by the same powerful wave emerged from the procross-country skiers. In the absence of documents (destroyed and disappeared), the story of Félix is served by a remarkable memory and by a scrupulous honesty, of a man who from a young age was at the heart of the culminating movement in these three ardent and fertile years, on which especially carries its story. Unfortunately, this vital testimony and this message of hope still exists only in Spanish, in three separate publications with modest distribution (*). I have no doubt that the time is not far away when this testimony on one of the most fruitful moments in our history and, at the heart of it, on an educational adventure of immense significance, will be translated and published in French and many other languages,

The prediction may seem reckless, because it is in vain in these days that we would look for a sign on the horizon, justifying such mad hope! Since the abrupt end of the Monzon experience, half a century (less than a year) has passed. At the level of the visible signs of a collective consciousness, forty-nine years of oblivion are deposited on a living seed. For Félix, in this half-century, there would have been sixteen years of captivity, followed by eleven years of exile on earth

(*) These publications are as follows

- 1) La Escuela de Militantes de Aragon, Una experiencia de Autogestion y de Analisis Sociologic °, Ediciones Foil, Barcelona 1978,
- 2) Una Experiencia de Education autogestionada, Edicion del Autor, Barcelona 1981
- 3) Las Colectividades de Aragon, Un Vivir autogestionado Promesa de Futuro, Edicion Laia / Divergencias, Barcelona 1985.

I also point out that Félix is in the process of finalizing a detailed autobiography (800 typed pages), where we will surely find, among other things, and in a more personal light, a testimony of prehand in an era of extraordinary richness.

foreign, pending the end of Franco's iron regime. In fact, he and Mati took the calculated risk of returning to Spain in 1971, still banned from living in Franco's lifetime, at a time when the regime was beginning to wear out (*). Already during his exile in France, in the midst of Spanish emigrants, then in Spain, Félix did not fail, verbally and in writing, to speak of education free and self-managed schools. He underlines that nowadays it would be easier to carry out such experiments than formerly, when they were carried out in spite of obstacles and dangers, in pre-revolutionary and revolutionary Spain of the thirties. Nowadays more lenient times, surely, but apparently not more favorable. The fact is that we listen to it with polite interest, even sometimes with admiration and enthusiasm, in the most diverse places, including in Universities where we invite him (as a sign of liberal times decidedly returned to Iberian land!) To give lectures on education. What I remember from all this is that "easy" or not, no experience similar to that of Félix from 1928-38

Obviously, there are more insidious and more radical difficulties than the risks of prison, exile, or the execution post. Even in prison, Félix has a holevé opportunity to make educational work. But surely also, these very long

years of captivity left their mark on him, and when he came out of prison, he was not sure that beyond this indomitable energy that I knew him, he has kept the extreme inner flexibility and the delicate listening ability, if essential

tierieg for a fruitful educational work (**). But even if the creative resources

(*) See note b. from p. (*) page N 425, in the note "Félix Carrasquer (1) - or hatching of a mission" (n ° 103).

(**) On this subject, see note b. from p. which follows that which I have just cited (in the previous note from b. of p.).

At the beginning of the sixties, after his arrival in the Paris region, Félix tried to animate in the Spanish emigrated environment a "Centra de Estudios Sociales", in the spirit of evening classes for adults in his native village Albalate and more late in Barcelona (1928-1936). This attempt was a failure. Perhaps the reason is not only in the "lack of curiosity and enthusiasm" of his young listeners - that Felix was just too likely, perhaps, to treat as "listeners" rather than interlocutors with whom there would be mutual listening. In what I could glimpse at Seminarsjigs "animated by Félix on his farm near Toulouse, Félix always seemed to me (as in his relationship with me) to be the figure of the master who has ready-made knowledge, highly structured and (me it seemed) practicalfixed and intangible, and which dispenses this knowledge to attentive and deferential pupils. I never felt there, any more than in his relation to me, an atmosphere of research, or something would move as much in the "master", Félix, as in the "pupils". As is so often the case, one has the impression that the idea does not occur to him that he could have something to learn, for his relationship to another person in particular; except, at most, new raw facts which will each be housed in the lockers already ready for that. Having

answer to everything, he no longer feels the questions, even the juiciest. But it is the questions and the invitation that they conceal, which stimulate curiosity and the joy of probing and discovering. The ready-made "answers" Pent short without answering anything, and push the being insecure in himself to deny the one in him who probes and questions and who is not satisfied with "everything ready".

I did not have the impression either that Mati, who is of an opening and an exceptional availability; in his relation to others, who has more the maturity of a rich experience and a great vivacity of spirit, was associated with these meetings, except at the level of stewardship tasks only. This shows how much the spirit which had animated the educational experiences of Félix's young years seems absent from the militant work of his more mature age, once passed the test of sixteen years of captivity ...

of Félix had remained intact through the years of captivity and exile, a "free school", in the very perspective of freedom which is that of Félix, is not the work of one, but collective creation . It only arises where there is a creative breath, not of one, but of a collective.

I also have the impression that this aspect of creation collective in the Vallespir and Monzon schools is much stronger than in Summerhill. At Summerhill, Neill and his wife were chronically slapped, but for the kids, once they had taken "the fold" it was rather the "dolce vita" it seems to me. Happy certainly and all that, but also without history and, to be honest, slightly sleepy (forgive me the expression), especially for older children. The kids came in sick, unhappy and overexcited, and (apart from the rare unsuitable, fired before time) they came out healthy, happy and sleepy5 .. (*)! As for me, it is a fact, I would certainly have been bored as a kid there, but not in Monzon. All that to say that everything can only be done in its time. It is probably no coincidence that the school of Summerhill has been able to flourish for almost half a century and it has even made (it seems) little ones here and there, while the educational work of Félix is deployed in a time limited to a dozen 'years (between the ages of twenty-three and thirty-three years), and that she remained until today without offspring.

And perhaps even today the time has not quite come for this seed to arise. It is not made to rise in times of somnolence, in heads and in front of overly full plates, on seats and in

(*) It is understood that the term "drowsy" is to be taken here figuratively, and that it does not relate to the physical plane or the emotional plane. On the contrary, on this level there is no doubt that the "free children of Summerhill" were lively and spontaneous, once acclimated to their school. The "drowsiness" of which I speak is placed on the intellectual level and, even more, on the spiritual level.

too soft hearts. It is not the seed for the full. She is forthose whom hunger tortures, as it tortured Félix from his young years, as it tortured those villagers to whom he returned to bring them in the joy of his heart what best far from them he had found and carried the best.

It's when men discover their hunger behind satiety, their indigence behind abundance, decay behind cheerful tunes, the void behind knowledge then the time will come. No one will have to conquer, to pray to them: take, take, I beg you! It is they who will throw themselves on what will fill their hunger, and who will watch tenderly over the hatching seeds that were once forgotten.

It is then that the seeds of yesteryear - the seeds of love, of hope those I have just mentioned and countless others still, believed to be lost forever on a scorched earth - it is then that they will germinate and will rise, and we will see a re-born earth green again.

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(()) No one is a prophet in his country or images of Epinal and self-esteem

(January 15 and 17) (*) Jesus of Galilee had experienced it at his expense when he returned to the region of Nazareth, and he had not appreciated the chose. Felix, on the other hand, was more patient with his relatives and friends who did not know how to see in him the "prophet", carrying a great mission - or who, like me, had him forget it. He did not curse any of us!

Many times I have had the opportunity to observe how true it is, that no one is a prophet among his own. 3 send two causes, which appear to me to be of quite different nature (**). There is self-esteem: when you are penetrated by the feeling (conscious or unconscious) of your own insignificance, this feeling of insignificance is communicated, as if by contagion, to everything that affects us so much

(*) See sign of reference to this note in the note "Félix Carrasquer (1) outbreak of a mission" (n ° 103), page N 427.

(**) Not as different however as it appeared to me at first glance, as the will show the rest of the reflection. The impression that these two causes stem from clearly different sources surely stemmed from the fact that in the case of myself, only the second of the causes which will be examined seemed to me to beto be taken into account. But probably the situation is more complex than that ...

or little closely. How someone with whom we are yours and you, who does not treat you from the top of his greatness, how he who looks like me and to whom even I see or believe to see faults or weaknesses that I do not have, how does that Could he be a great man?

To put it another way: we are only able to recognize the greatness of someone who is close to us, when we already feel or sense the greatness which is latent in ourselves. And from there, there is only one step to also feel the latent greatness in all being, and to have eyes to see when what is latent in all is realized and unfolds in one among us.

And there is also the false idea that we have of human greatness (*). We have all been brought up with the Epinal images of all those who are said to be, or to have been in the past crowned with prestige, "great men". We have always been presented with them as models of all the perfections and all the virtues. (And the "human shadows" sometimes delicately added to a picture of glory, are only there to make it more touching and to bring out the lights even more vividly ...) Also, without us ever having to say it to ourselves Clearly, it goes without saying that the least of things first, to be able to be even a candidate for promotion (by some supra-
personal and solemn ...) to the rank of "great man" (and once promoted, mainly be entitled to a place in the books of our present or future schoolchildren, or to a statue in a public place, or to give a name to a street or a square ...) - the least of things is d 'be first of all perfect; to be in all points and in all circumstances far above weaknesses (alas human of ordinary people (just like you and me!): not to be trapped in any illusion, to be supremely indifferent to praise as to blame, compassionate, generous, lively, patient, intelligent, scholar etc etc. in
in short, to be a truly "superior" being, of a completely different clay and a very different essence than "you and me" (**).

(*) I had the opportunity more than once, in the pages of La Clef des Songes, to explain myself with this inveterate idea, singularly tenacious even in me (frank-chi, however, a lot of pictures ...). See in particular the notes (inspired by the work of Marcel Légaut) "All men are fallible - or breakthrough" and "The time of crutches and the time to walk" (nos 73, 75), of the month of novembre. These take up a theme that has already insisted on in the July notes (n ° s 20-31), aroused by the impact of the encounter with thought.of Légaut.

(**); I needed the readings and the close and long-term reflection of these last three or four months, on the theme of "mutants" or "Grandeur et cracks", so that I finally root out in depth (I hope at least) the last traces

of that tenacious, insidious, strangely distorting cliché. I know more than one who would laugh at my efforts to fan out a way of seeing that he thinks he has long since passed (or even from birth, who knows ...), and who will fall into the trap at the first opportunity: not to see a manifest greatness because the head of the gentleman (or the lady) does not come back to him or because his opinions displease him. By the way, none of the eighteen "mutants" I come from with great difficulty to finish going around, including my faithful and old friend Félix (who will have been entitled to almost fifty pages ...), would not be "big" in my eyes. Because there is not a single one (except Riemann at most, for lack of me surely knowing enough about him ...) with whom there are things that definitely do not come back to me, and that the good Lord (who here is to blame no less than the interestssé) should still have done better.

The (sad?) Truth, however, is that there is and there never would have been (as far as I can judge) a living soul that responds to this "minimum vital" of "big man". As soon as you have the opportunity, and more curiosity, to look a little closer and raise a corner of the ceremonial veils that surround the men who, by mutual agreement and under the aegis of Lady Culture aka History, were decked out with the sign "Great - please do not touch expensive ! ", we fall illico on things which all seem, my faith, of steeple - and not even that a little! And when there is no sign nor nothing, that it is about 'a gentleman or a lady like you and me and that by chance we had the opportunity, he or she too, to see a little closer, it's still the same. It is only at home (underestimated or not ...) that it is often difficult to see what squeaks and who is wrong. (But I doubt that this is the only exception that confirm the rule ...)

The fact remains that as long as we remain stuck on the usual clichés on the "big man", we are not likely to ever know how to recognize greatness, when by chance we meet it on our way, and in particular with someone one we know "too well". Human greatness is neither in "gifts" (everything depends on what we do with the modest or brilliant gifts which are devolved to us by being born (*)), nor in an impossible perfection, but in something entirely different in nature. And the common inability to know greatness (if not on the faith of a sign ...), is the same incapacity, the same thickness which prevents recognition of creation, so often ignored or looked down upon when she appears naked, without the essential quality lab 7 ...

(*) Regarding the relationship between "gifts" and "creation", see the continuation of the three consecutive notes "Creation and maturation (1) (2) (3)" (nos 48-50), and more especially the second of these notes.

This incapacity is by no means limited to our appreciation of those of ourto be surrounded by their works and their acts. I met her at every step, and very often where I would have least expected it, _with relatives and friends, certainly, and in the upper reaches of the Temples of Science no less than elsewhere (*) . Many times I have been stunned - or even, the pennyfle cut, when malice sometimes joins negligence.

This quasi-universal "incapacity" is by no means innate. She is moreearly in the nature of a blockage of personal faculties of discernment and judgment, more or less permanent and more or less complete blockage from one case to another. It is not that these faculties are absent or shabby - quite the contrary! But we are like a skilful violinist-musician-in-a-room in front of a window wide open on the street, which would have in hand an admirable Stradivarius (but alas, without label ...), and who would throw him in a corner with shame

and in spite of it, every time from the street the accents (say) of a barrel organ, the whistles of a police officer or the manly bursts of the barracks opposite; because at the conservatory where he was raised, he was taught that only street noises are real music ... In short: when the spontaneous work of our faculties of perception and expression is not taken without taking in charge, approved, pampered by the world around us; when, coming from ourselves and not "from the street", it goes in the least in the world against the current of noise-from-all-the-world suddenly, there is no one left and in any case
more violin!

Here we are back, at the turn of the road, to the age-old "hole syndrome"skin ". It is him again, no doubt! And the tenacious atavism of the herd cannot be separated from this" self-esteem "mentioned earlier, from the under-esteem of what is best in us and we throw in a shameful corner and confused, to obediently cheer us up by competing with the street noises.

And what becomes of the images of Epinal in these stories of violin? Painters or fiddlers, I say it's the same story. To despise his ears (which are fine from birth) and a beautiful violin, or to despise his eyes (perfect for seeing surfaces and depths, lights and shadows ...) and his brushes and painter's palette, everything it is not, one and the same thing. It is the contempt for our eyes and their candid testimony that makes us take the image of Epinal for a masterpiece. And, by a fair return of things, the

(*) It has been superabundantly discussed throughout the more than a thousand pages of Harvests and Sowing, which will dispense me from having to illustrate this in the future ...

flashy fact of Epinal maintains this disrespect for us, this contempt of naked greatness, without appearance without label, humble and unknown, who lives deep within us (*) -

((109) Education and act of faith

(January 16 and 18) (**) Very few readers, surely, will have an idea of how "free" (or, as Félix says, "self-managed") education, in the sense that Felix hears it, uses the teacher's resources in a way that is absolutely without common measure with what takes place for a teaching style traditionnel. I know something about it through an experience somewhat in this sense, which I pursued at university for five or six years (from 1976 or 77). This is a "course" (optional (***)) that I announced under the name "Introduction to Research ", and in which each time about sixty students participated. I invited them to propose to all of their comrades, on the board, questions of a more or less mathematical nature which had intrigued them, and in a second time, to choose each one and to take in hand one of these subjects or any other of his choice, and to continue on this theme throughout the year a personal research, with my occasional help as and when needed. opened fire from the first session, throwing on the board a dozen questions all that were concrete and academic steps, so as to

(*) This relationship between "image of Epinal" and "self-contempt" was already clear, from a somewhat different perspective, from the first pages of Harvests and Sowing, in the section "Infallibility (of others) and contempt (self)" (ReS I, section no. 4).

(**) See sign of reference to this note in the note "Félix Carrasquer (3): the self-managed school, school of freedom" (n ° 105), page N 439.

(***) "Option courses" are courses which the student is free to follow or not, and which he can choose from a more or less wide range of such courses. Theoretically, they are supposed to allow him to improve on such or such subject of his choice. Practically and except in exceptional cases, the students chosen-such a course, and as easy as possible, to increase their general averagethe by a labor put which they hope modest. For me, the interest of the option course was that it is entirely outside of any overall program. I am not obliged to deal with such a subject, which students will need to take this other course. One measure of the relative success of my "Introduction to Research" option course is that many of the students were finally interested enough to invest in it in a significant way, while from the simple point of view of "utility" (exams and classification), it did not bring themnot much.

upset the narrow and school-like idea they had of "math that", or a "mathematical problem". It was a way of catching their imagination, by showing them that mathematics is like an inexhaustible playground, offering the curious player, even if he is a novice or even ignorant, an absolutely unlimited range of exciting games. One of the charms of this wonderful game is that the particular games it offers us with such prodigious profusion are by no means defined in advance, as on an endless list where we would be puzzled which one to choose, but that we even imagine them according to our whim, and that each of us, even without experience or background, can invent that no one had ever thought about or perhaps (without him) will never think of. And what is more, these games are often not less deep, and with unforeseen and innumerable modifications, that those on which the mathematicians of today and centuries past were impassioned and competed with cunning, without being close to exhausting them yet.

After a first session spent unpacking peels a few "games", with already some of the less shy students coming here and there to the board to participate, the ice was generally broken. Students pricked themselves at the game, and from the next session the week after, when it was not already from the first-miere, he came to the board to also offer "mathematical games" of their own, or that they had had the opportunity to practice (without suspecting that they were then "doing math" ...). We spent some more sessions like that, to throw on the carpet a multitude of games and mathematical situations requiring reflection, and to already try to glimpse, for some, what genre working they could call and how to approach them. After which, it was high time to "converge", and that each student chose a subject, either alone or with one or more others. The actual work began, which would continue, each on its own theme, during the rest of the year.

It was in the weeks that followed, above all, that my faculties of intuition and mathematical imagination were put to the test. (Just like those of the reckless collaborator (*) who, a year or two, had ventured by participate in this experience as a teacher.) I had to confront myself

(*) This is Christine Voisin, who has already been mentioned two or three times in Récoltes et Semailles. Christine at that time was not even part of the official faculty of the Faculty, but she was doing ^{sup}workpleanyou. It is a work notoriously underpaid even by comparison with the assistants while there she worked in tandem with me, and did a job qualitatively equivalent to mine.

to twenty or thirty problems, one totally different from the other, and which for the most part totally escaped all my past mathematical experience. I had opened the doors wide, and the wind was blowing ... How many times before such an incredible problem that I would never have dreamed of, I felt empty-headed, completely overwhelmed! And many times also the decisive ideas to approach it came from the student who had posed it. I also often had the opportunity to write down from the first part of the course, before my own work had not started, that most of the students, once their interest had been stimulated, had a much keener visual or combinative intuition than I did: when a student explained on the board some tactical procedure, many times everyone except me understood, "the teacher"! My mathematician reflexes, particularly those of a certain precision and rigor of expression, were a handicap. course at this stage of work. On the other hand, almost all the students were distraught at the task of putting their ideas into intelligible and correct language, and in writing; work, however, really essential and fruitful, when it comes to deepening the understanding of a situation, and (with rare exceptions) the only way also to test the validity of his ideas. This is where my possession of a solid "job" as a mathematician took over all of his rights.

No more than in the research work of the mathematician by profession, there was no question of us necessarily arriving at a complete "solution" of all the problems addressed. But, insofar as a real work continued, on the way we were sure in any case (that, I knew it and it was my fortitude!) to learn something substantial about what we were watching. In any work animated by a real desire to know, work as time goes by, creates a knowledge that both satisfies and fuels this desire. Also I was sure that in this "course" which was not one, whatever happened and provided only that they put their own, the students would experience (and for the first time) what mathematical research really is, and even just "research".

Some colleagues rather well disposed (*) thought that I was able

(*) I had ample opportunity especially to hear the bell sounds my 1 available-
ses, of colleagues scandalized by my experience, that they took for a badjoke. I
evoke this mentality, which (did I end up learning) is the rule and not the
exception among the teachers a little further down in this same paragraph. My
experience, among many other things, has been an irreplaceable to get to know on
the spot a certain mentality which prevails in my profession.

As for the amazing gifts, and the "horizon" to the endorsement, which I saw myself credited by the most benevolent colleagues, it must be believed that Christine, she,

who did the same job as me and no worse than me, she didn't need it! And it was with the greatest evil and by miracle almost that she succeeded if to land, years later, an assistant position (it must be said that competition is tight ...), and with him his daily bread assured.

to embark on a daredevil adventure, because I had a horizon my exceptional thematic, and in addition to the "amazing gifts", well above (they assured me) their means to them. But I know very well that it has nothing to do with it. Even with a "mathematical horizon" which (by impossible) would have embraced the totality of known mathematics, what would it have served me? 'Since precisely almost all the problems tackled essentially escaped from said "known mathematics" and to his methods! The fact is that despite my supposed "gifts" I often felt overwhelmed, and it was the students many times (and not always the "good maths" according to academic criteria!) That saved pay the bet, getting to see something where I still couldn't see anything. And the question for us was by no means to go as far as possible as far as possible in our research, or even to "complete" completely within the year all the questions addressed. It was then, suddenly, that I would have really needed a superhuman mathematical genius! The question is that there is real research for everyone, a creation. And certainly cannot stimulate

research, creation, teacher whose spirit would have remained completely foreign-manage for a lifetime what real research is, who would have no idea (except the usual clichés) of what a creation is. Alas, this is the case for almost all teachers, including at university. Many even among them believe that the only thought that the student's work could be for him a

joy, scandalize. (He himself did not work long and hard, before finally sweating the others!) How then to be surprised that the students of the faculties, after fifteen or twenty years when they faded on the benches schools and amphitheatres to swallow revenge "programs", do not have the slightest idea what it looks like, than "to do research"?

No, there is no reason to be proud of our schools and our teaching ..,

What does it take for the teacher to embark on such a collective adventure of creative teaching, which for each of the students is an opportunity for personal research? These are not, as we have just seen, nor extra "gifts" ordinary, nor all-round knowledge. Far against, we must "feel by the guts "what is a" research ", a" creation ", and what is not - you have to have yourself a researcher's soul. In addition, from a certain degree of specialization (like the one that prevails at university, or in the last

high school years), you need to have a solid grip on the basics of the trade (here, this as a mathematician). It is rare, moreover, the "researcher at heart" who did not take the trouble to learn the basics of the trade, in the direction in which he worked

worth. But the soul of a researcher and the profession are not everything yet, obviously. In a country like France, there are thousands of researchers passionate about their profession. But their teaching is just as much a prisoner of routines and

programs than that of others, and ignore just as much that the student, just like themselves, is a being endowed with an innate creativity, that a teaching digene of this name should provoke and deploy.

No, what is especially lacking is none of the things I have just mentioned, however essential they may be (or at least some of them). The essential thing here is of a very different nature. It is a faith, a total confidence, as well in its own creative capacities (if limites be they ...), than in those of the pupils. It is to know, to knowsafe: modest or powerful in all of us assembled here, there are

the ability to create! Where there is such assurance, there is no longer fear. Like the fear, so common, of looking silly in front of the students; to "dry" miserably in front of them, even even, confronted with them "on equal terms" nowbut, to appear as "stupid" or more stupid than them! (And this is not the great and formidable secret of the teacher, that he does not confess evenme to himself, and that suddenly will be irretrievably stale ...) And there is also the fear that the whole experience will go down miserably, failing to be yourself up to the circumstances (would it not be necessary unjustly being a real genius?). Or failing to manage to involve the pupils in an adventure which perhaps scares them or which indifferents them, or which would totally exceed their means ...

This kind of fear always comes from the ego, and most often takes the face of "reason" which objects with a concerned and serious air, before what it presents to us as strange aberrations (*)! They are of rule chat that when it comes to embarking on a path that would suit usnelle, which is not sanctioned by any established practice, nor encouraged in advance by any favorable prejudice of a benevolent entourage; each time, in short, that we are preparing to make a truly original work, even an innovative work, instead of confining ourselves more or less to following cahin-caha the tracks all traced, very warm in large company. And these reasonable objections, or fears that don't say their names, are resistant to the arguments and the reasons

(* Compare with the section "The Key to the Big Dream or the voice of reason,
and the other" (# 6).

even the most judicious, the most irrefutable. Because even if they like to give themselves the appearance of it, they are not situated at the level of reason or logic, but on a completely different level.

This division of being, and these confused fears which are its sign, take end with an act of faith. It is in such an act that the true beginning of the new experience. The faith that this act brings out from the depths of being is a source of both confidence and humility. It gives us the humble fortitude which allows us to let our inadequacies appear without false shame, and to accept without lessons the lessons of experience, including in the event that it turns out to be a failure. And when self-esteem ble There is no obstacle, failure as well as success has a lesson to teach us, and bears fruit when the lesson is understood ...

In the case in question here, I must recognize that experience was far from being a total success, like those reported by Félix (in Spain between 1928 and 1938). Given the totally different context, the opposite would have been surprising. It was with freshmen from college, fresh out of high school, that the best work was done. Many of them have even done a remarkable job by cleverness and imagination. To my surprise and surely also to theirs, it turned out that many had the makings of the real mathematician. (I took care, however, to encourage them to embark on such a hazardous path, given the tight economic situation!) Most of the students did a serious job, and we can say that for these the goal that I had set myself, to "introduce them to research", has been achieved. But there were also some students who remained lost until the end, not understanding what was going on or what was being asked of them. For these, it is necessary to note the complete failure. I had the impression that most, if not all, of them had chosen this course, within the range of "option courses" available to them, in the hope that it would be a way cheaply to increase their "general average", and that, good prince, I would end up chewing their work if they themselves until the end were limited to doing nothing. Missed calculation

Of course, the atmosphere that prevails everywhere in schools and at university, with the dread of grades and exams, profoundly distorts the relationship of pupils and students to their work. In general, this seemed to me to be all the more the case since they had been studying for a longer time. Students are more affected than high school students, and the years spent on the benches of amphitheaters complete the leaching of creativity, already started well in

high school and municipal school. After a certain point (after about two or three years of university), one has the impression that on an intellectual level, the student has been completely and irremediably sterilized - that there is nothing more to be gained except, when he "succeeds", turns of learned monkey (*).

Yes, a real delirium! And until when?

¹¹⁰⁾ The new spirit of e education

(January 16 and 20) (**) This "traditional model" for teaching seems to be so self-evident that myself, stuck in the general atmosphere, had tendency to forget that one can conceive an education in a completely different spirit (***). Again in my thinking about Summerhill in the start notes

(*) This "impression" (that the student has been "completely and irreparably sterilized") is only partially justified. This "sterilization" is in fact a deep blockage of the creative faculties. Such a blockage is (I believe) never "irremediable". But the unlocking of such a state of intellectual paralysis seems to me a very rare thing - it requires nothing less than a real inner birth. Most often, one carries such a paralysis his life during, and even one clings to it as to something infinitely more expensive than his life ...

But I sense that at the time of the great Mutation, among many byAmong those who will live and perhaps even in everyone and more or less at the same time, there will be such a deep unblocking. Perhaps those who will live will be those who will not close themselves to the great Breath coming to shake the doors of their being, those who will let jump the bolts and the Wind engulf where the miasmas of helpless languish, and give back air and vigor and life to enter-living res ...

(**) See sign of reference to this note in the note "Félix Carrasquer (4): Freedom-Summerhill -and freedom-Vallespir-Monzon ", page N 451.

(***) However, without knowingly being inspired by any precedent, I had (so to speak by instinct) tried for my part some educational experiences in such a "totally different" spirit, like the one reported in the previous one note "Education and act of faith". But, under the pressure of universal attitudes lying received in teaching, and for lack of a major reflection to situate my experiences in a global and evolutionary perspective, these seemed to me almost seemed like a kind of "personal fantasy" that I would have paid for myself, thanks to a somewhat special situation that was made for me among my colleagues at my university; and this is surely how they were perceived and by the said colleagues, and by the students themselves (while finding, them, these "fantasies" to their liking ...). The truth is that these experiences in the universities came in response to a deep dissatisfaction with the setting and the spirit (including the spirit among the students, certainly) in which my teaching had continued until then. More and more, this teaching seemed to me condemned to sterility without remedy, to the point of losing all meaning for me. Even these

"Introduction to Research" courses were a bad thing, like a glass of water poured into a hot desert. It is in these provisions that I finally mandated and obtained my secondment to the CNRS (National Center for Scientific Research), from October 1984, dispensing me since then to pursue a teaching activity.

December (Notes Nos. 88 to 95), thought did not occur to me that there was a "gap" (and even a "major gap") in Neill's educational work. I had to confront myself again and more seriously than in the distant past^(*) to Félix's educational work, so that this gap appears to me in all its scope. In light of this reflection, I see before us two transMaster trainings in education in general and in teaching, transformations which are already prefigured by some avant-garde experiences.

1 °) The total abandonment of all kinds of repression of sex, following the path opened by Neill to Summerhill since 1921.

2 °) The total transformation of education, in a spirit of cooperation-creative tion between pupils and teachers, in the way opened by Tolstoy to Yasnala Poliana in the last century, and by Félix in Spain between 1928 and 1938.

The profound transformation of mentalities that will be initiated by the end of the century I think, by the great Mutation now imminent, seems to me in truth the indistinguishable of an equally profound transformation in the mind of the education, from birth to the threshold of adulthood. It is in this optimal that comprehensive about the psychic and spiritual evolution of our species about to mutate, that we should see the two great breakthroughs in the way of conceiving education, mentioned just now. Perhaps there should still be added a third, which does not seem to arise from the previous two, and which is perhaps the one which in Félix's eyes is the most crucial of all:

3 °) The creation of an atmosphere, both at school and at home, which constantly encourages the child or adolescent to take on all the responsibilities that he could reasonably wish to assume, in relation to his degree of physical and mental development, and with its human and natural environment. The child's "empowerment" develops in constant and flexible symbiosis with his own wishes and with his real possibilities, which flourish best through the exercise of responsibilities spontaneously assumed. (Including that

(*) The "distant past" in question, which was more forgotten until last year still, takes place around the year 1960, when Félix told me about his experiences-these educational in Spain.

directions he gives to his curiosity ...) This symbiosis seems to me successful in a particularly happy and complete way in the three pedagogical experiences-Félix's giques of which I spoke previously (*).

It goes without saying that none of these three major transformations is possible without an attitude of attentive and loving respect for the child. Otherwise, everything sinks into hollow rhetoric and into new molds just as cool-riles than the ancients. Fertility never comes from a mold, but only from the creativity of the mind. It is from this fundamental attitude of loving respect, only (and at the end perhaps long and patient labors ...), that will end by being born all the rest.

(*) Especially in the two notes "The rise" and "The self-managed school", liber schoolheads 104, 105.