

Students' loyalties torn in struggle for French reform

More than 500 students crowded into the smoky French classroom. The steeply inclined benches were filled, forcing some students to stand in the doorways. The atmosphere was tense, and everyone waited with anticipation for the chaos to calm.

Finally, five students, all with serious faces and burning cigarettes, mounted the stage and sat down. The speaker announced that it had been decided that the students were now "on strike" against the government's reforms and called for all students to meet on the

highway that afternoon.

Another announcement was made: thousands of French students were to take over the tollbooth to collect money for a demonstration in Paris later that week. Following the announcements, most of the students stormed out of the room after their leaders, leaving paper cups and cigarette butts strewn everywhere.

I sat alone in the first row, totally confused and absolutely amazed.

and nationwide demonstrations. Commitment and unity were the students' weapons. The movement ended 15 days later with the withdrawal of the proposal in early December.

A student victory, it would seem, but the price was high. One student died, hundreds were wounded and a persistent and pervasive feeling of dissatisfaction still loomed between students and the government.

As a foreign student studying at the French university during this period, I experienced the movement as an outsider. I didn't know the man who was killed in the Parisian chaos Dec. 4, nor did I know anyone wounded in the many demonstrations. I was, however, involved.

Every day I confronted barricades of heavy furniture and angry students blocking the doors to classrooms. Trying to enter buildings, I was interrogated. The secret phrase, "I am a foreigner" with the unavoidable American accent seemed to work. I was allowed to enter the classroom.

I felt like a traitor because I continued to attend classes while the students were on strike, but I too was against the reform. As most of my classes continued to take place during the strike, I felt my education would be jeopardized if I didn't attend. It came down to my obligation to the University of Oregon and its exchange pro-

grams or my commitment to my French friends and their fight for freedom.

I ended up trying to make the best out of the dilemma by being as active as I could against the reforms, while keeping up with my studies.

I walked through the narrow streets of Poitiers with 7,000 other students chanting "No negotiations!" and "Liberty: Yes, Yes, Yes! Devaquet: No, No, No!" I watched the nightly news with my French friends and saw them become more angry and frustrated listening to the ministers' repeated refusals to listen to the students of their country.

I also bought a paper at my neighborhood "tabac" on Dec. 5 with pictures of the violence in Paris the night before. One photo showed a student who had lost an eye when a grenade exploded in his face. Another student had lost a hand. The paper also contained the news of a 22-year-old man who had been beaten to death by police in a riot.

That historic night on Dec. 4 brought a million people into the streets of France, according to organizers, and 200,000 by police accounts. Trains and buses had brought them from all over the country to the capital for this day of what was intended to be peaceful protest.

In the afternoon, a delegation of 16 students met with the ministers in Paris to demand the withdrawal of reforms. The government answered a resounding "No!" and it was then that the scene turned ugly.

The next morning's Liberation headline ran: "Chirac says no to 800,000 students."

If the leaders don't listen to the youth of their country, students believed, France could no longer be considered a democracy.

Contemplating democracy made me think of our own country: America, the paragon of democracy. Since 1980, the American educational system has faced severe cuts in funding while the federal financial aid budget has been hacked. Certainly many American students were opposed to these changes. But we did not unite in a nationwide protest.

The French student uprising in the fall of 1986 represents a powerful force that eventually brought about a political change. Solidarity prevailed.

For two consecutive weeks, the students controlled the universities and ruled the streets. In the end, their strength resulted in the reversal of a national law. For whatever reason — geographic size, layers of bureaucracy, a feeling of futility among students — the United States has never seen a similar situation.

Nevertheless, many French students fear this victory is temporary. Prime Minister Jacques Chirac, upon withdrawal of the reform, spoke of the "current" proposal being dropped "for the time being." The fact that he chose these words makes many question whether or not the battle is won.

By Catherine Merten

Editor's note: Catherine Merten is a University student attending the University of Poitiers in France. She will contribute articles periodically on the culture, lifestyle and politics of the French.

HEALTH YOURSELF '87 Crisis Prevention Conference Saturday, January 17, EMU



Has 18 Workshops to help you deal with the stress in your life.

8:00-9:00 Registration at the Erb Memorial Union

9:00-9:20 Opening

Our Mind - Session I

9:30-11:00 (select one of the following)

Shyness/Conversation: Mary Lee Nelson

Learn some communication skills that are geared for the shy person. Overcoming shyness is possible through strengthening your communication skills. Good communication is a balance of talking and listening.

Effective Study Skills - Time Management: Reed Clarke

This workshop on time management will help you learn how to use your time effectively, break tasks into manageable units, and control procrastination.

Living with Loss and Loneliness: Delpha Camp

The loss of a loved one is something most of us will have to live with, be it death or moving away from family and support. This workshop will explain the grieving process, and provide some suggestions for helping one get over the grief.

Stress Management: Charlie Nixon

Through lecture, discussion, and assessment instruments, learn how to identify your stressors, and ways to control them.

Adult Children of Alcoholics: Samantha Hickman

This workshop will explore some of the life difficulties experienced by people who grew up in alcoholic/addictive households. A panel of adult children of alcoholic parents will share ways of "recovery."

Making a Career Choice/Change: Step One: Self-Assessment: Gina Huston

This workshop will focus on learning how to identify your interest, skills, and values related to the world of work.

11:00-11:15 BREAK

Our Body - Session II

11:15-12:45 (select one of the following)

Eating Disorders: The Catch-22: Carolyn Carter and Elsie M. Sue Balint

Discussion in this workshop will focus on: options for disordered eating; do or don't diets work; conformity with society or eating disorder; the set-point theory.

Be Your Own Physician: James Jackson

This workshop will focus on common illness and injuries which can often be handled with basic home treatment. Some of the topics that may be covered include: headaches, insomnia, burns, abrasions, hypertension, menstrual cramps, hay fever, viral virus bacterial infections.

Self-Relaxation Methods: Steve Schweitzer

An experimental workshop that will teach relaxation skills including deep breathing, progressive relaxation, the use of imagery, and self-hypnosis. Optional: bring a pillow, pad, or blanket!

Substance Abuse: Philip Humbert

Learn the facts about various illegal substances and drug addiction. Topics may include: marijuana, cocaine, alcohol.

Assertiveness Training: Gaylen Wayman-Thalman

Learn the differences between aggression, assertion, and passivity, and how they are related to stereotypic male and female sex roles in our society.

Effective Study Skills: General Techniques: Michael Motrow

Learn general study skills. Understand why you procrastinate, and how to manage your time to improve your study habits. Find out how to get the most out of your education.

12:45-1:30 Brown Bag Lunch

1:30-2:40 Featured Speaker: Dr. Irving Oyle: Presentation on "The Doctor Within."

ONE WORLD: Session III

2:50-4:20 (select one of the following)

Living in the Nuclear Age: Vip Short

The threat of global catastrophe, its effect on personal well-being, and the lack of acknowledgement by the helping professions.

Intimacy: Lisa Marie Divincent and Richard Grimaldi

Explore what intimacy means in terms of intimacy with one's self, with significant other(s), and with the world at large.

Eastern Philosophy and Stress: Nathan Jay Rotter

Learn ancient eastern psychological techniques of relaxation in order to feel calmer and psychologically stronger in our western technologically oriented, fast-paced culture.

Suicide: What Can I Do? Patricia L. Norberg

This workshop will focus on identifying the cues for suicidal risk, how to assess the risk/evaluate stressors, and learning important skills of crisis intervention. Learn about self-destructive thoughts and feelings.

AIDS: Facts and Fallacies: The Shanti Organization

Learn about the facts concerning AIDS.

Preventing Student Burn-Out: Todd Russell

This workshop will focus on identifying the signs and symptoms of student burn-out and learning effective methods for preventing burn-out, feelings that may be characterized as student burn-out include: emotional exhaustion, feeling overwhelmed, discouraged, and confused.

4:30-4:45 Closure

Your ticket to the conference is the conference packet which can be purchased for \$10 at the U of O Bookstore.

1 unit of credit can be earned by enrolling for CPSY 199 at the Department of Counseling Psychology, 1761 Alder, by January 16.

Sponsored by the Crisis Center and the De Busk Counseling Center.

Reporter's Notebook

Alain Devaquet, the French minister of higher education, had proposed a series of reforms designed to enhance the quality of the French university system. The reforms suggested increased tuition, elevated entrance requirements and the introduction of regional diplomas to replace the current method of issuance by the national government.

Students objected to the government's proposals, believing it would increase unemployment and transform universities into elitist institutions.

In late November, students throughout the country took on the task of trying to reverse the government's position. It began as a peaceful movement, and its tactics included class boycotts

THINK BIG!

24" X 36"
COPIES

Now at

kinko's

7 DAYS A WEEK
OPEN 24 HOURS

Maps — Blueprints — Artwork and much more!

860 E. 13th 344-7894

announcing
the
opening of ...

The
Golden
Washboard
A convenient,
clean laundromat

HOURS: 8 am - 10 pm, 7 days a week.

1 block
from campus

1607 E. 19th

(across from
Sunny)