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CONSTITUTIONAL PARALYSIS, THE FRENCH LEFT,  
AND THE FIFTH REPUBLIC.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| INTRODUCTION .....                                    | 1  |
| Chapter   |    |
| I.    POLITICAL ISSUES IN THE CONSTITUTION .....      | 5  |
| II.   PROTEST -- AGGRAVATOR OF PARALYSIS .....        | 12 |
| III.  INHERITORS OF PROTEST                           |    |
| Communist Party .....                                 | 23 |
| Socialist Party .....                                 | 35 |
| IV.  THE ADMINISTRATION -- THE NEW POLICYMAKERS ..... | 53 |
| V.   RESPONSE OF PROTEST -- THE COMMON PROGRAM .....  | 65 |
| CONCLUSION .....                                      | 85 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY .....                                    | 87 |



## INTRODUCTION

The problem to be addressed in this paper is the constitutional paralysis present in the French Fifth Republic. Constitutional paralysis is defined here as the lack of consensus among nearly all major groups concerning society's basic structural and institutional composition.

In most western industrial nations, political activities take place within a given constitutional framework. One would hardly expect the average British Labourite to advocate abandoning his nation's constitution, nor is one likely to hear an American Democrat advocate a new Constitutional Convention. France, however, has not been blessed with such consensus. Traditionally, political battles have been fought without any of the constitutional consensus enjoyed by such countries as the United Kingdom and the United States. Constitutional issues have, historically speaking, always pervaded the French political scene, as the Boulanger and Dreyfuss affairs demonstrate. Because of this paralysis, the French have had a high turnover rate in regimes; in this century alone, ~~it has~~ <sup>they have</sup> had three republics and the Vichy government. Constitutional paralysis has been an integral part of France's political landscape.

The present regime, the Fifth Republic, is no exception. Whether one speaks of the cartel des non in 1962, the May 'events' in 1968, or the ever-present issue of Article 16, the regime's political scene is aglow with burning issues concerning its basic structural and institutional composition. No wonder then that with every election there is the anxiety that comes from the realization that not just the seats of power, but the

very power structure itself is at stake. In short, the historical paralysis of the constitution, whatever form it may take, is still very strong in the Fifth Republic.

This lack of consensus alone would pose a serious problem for any leader. Yet the regime's constitutional paralysis is aggravated by another inherently French trait: the tradition of protest. Briefly, the French are the political opposite of the Germans: they question authority in an almost paranoid manner, they disobey most any law whenever possible, they resist organization, etc. An understanding, therefore, of the complexity of the problem of constitutional paralysis is not complete without examining this tradition of protest.

France's tradition of protest is still present today in the form of the political Left. It is the parties of the Left which have inherited and possess this penchant for protest in the Fifth Republic. Consequently, they attack the regime, preventing the termination of constitutional paralysis and the establishment of consensus. Thus, before one can have a true appreciation for the regime's problem of constitutional paralysis aggravated by the tradition of protest, one must have an appreciation for the characteristics, organization, and history of the Leftist parties in the Fifth Republic, the two major ones being the Communists and the Socialists.

The attempt by the Fifth Republic's founders to devise a more effective system of government, i.e., to avoid this paralysis, has led to one especially interesting situation. De Gaulle, it must be remembered, assumed power in the wake of a regime totally devoid of any consensus. He therefore attempted to modify, or at least avoid, this paralysis, so that the state would be able to function, by depoliticizing his new regime,

the Fifth Republic. Henceforth, many issues which had previously been horrendously handled by politicians would be handled by those away from the chaotic, constitutionally paralyzed political arena -- the bureaucrats. Clearly, de Gaulle, determined that France regain a measure of its former glory, was not interested in such mundane but politically volatile issues as the price of milk. The slack had to be taken up somewhere, and it was taken up by the bureaucracy. Yet by removing accountability for many volatile issues from the political arena to an arena outside the citizen's reach -- a switch unsatisfactory to many Frenchmen -- de Gaulle only helped to strengthen the protest tradition and thus prevented consensus from developing under this regime. Thus today even l'Administration is under attack.

As stated above, an increasingly bureaucratized regime is unsatisfactory to many Frenchmen, and it is therefore under severe criticism. In response to the alienation generated by the regime's administration (admittedly, among other reasons), the Leftist Parties penned the Common Program. In this light, the Common Program can be seen as a reflection of the traditional sources of protest; almost all the criticisms levelled against the Fifth Republic were coalesced in it. In short, this document was a new manifestation of the old paralysis. Thus an acquaintance with the Common Program -- its formation, its contents, and its collapse -- is necessary for an understanding of the nature of the lack of constitutional consensus.

All the subjects previously mentioned -- the protest tradition, the inheritors of the protest tradition (the Left), the rise of the bureaucracy, and the Common Program -- are addressed in this paper with reference to and in illustration of the paralysis present in the régime

actuel. What is not addressed here is a solution, for no one has yet come up with one, not even the French themselves. That does not mean that the examination of the problem is fruitless; at least one can say afterward that one has a better feel for the lack of constitutional consensus in France.

## POLITICAL ISSUES IN THE CONSTITUTION

It is impossible to take the Constitution for granted. No less than under the Fourth Republic, constitutional questions are themselves matters of controversy, and what ought to be purely political controversies have been perpetually complicated by constitutional implications.<sup>1</sup> This is exacerbated by the Fifth Republic's origins: it began its life as a regime intended by all but a small number of convinced Gaullists to be only temporary -- a "régime de salut public".<sup>2</sup> Thus, there is an anxiety among the political class that each election or referendum might precipitate a major crisis.<sup>3</sup> In short, the Fifth Republic, twenty years after its formation, still lacks legitimacy.

There are two major areas of contention in the constitution. The first concerns the modification of the traditional relationship between the Government and Parliament; the second concerns the role of the President.

The first area of concern is the increased power accorded by the Constitution to the Government to prevent Parliamentary harassment or

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<sup>1</sup>Jack Hayward and Vincent Wright, "Presidential Supremacy and the French General Elections of March 1973," Parliamentary Affairs 26 (Summer 1973):274.

<sup>2</sup>Dorothy Pickles, The Government and Politics of France, Vol. II (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1973):342.

<sup>3</sup>Jack Hayward and Vincent Wright, "Presidential Supremacy and the French General Elections of March 1973," Parliamentary Affairs 26 (Summer 1973):274.

obstruction, snap defeats,<sup>4</sup> and frequent challenges to its safety, whether by votes of confidence or by votes that can be used to diminish confidence, even without endangering the life of the Government. Measures to strengthen the Government vis-à-vis the National Assembly were on the whole welcomed by ex-Ministers of the Fourth Republic who had been trying to achieve a similar result during the last days of the regime.<sup>5</sup> But the 1958 Constitution went very much farther than anything suggested, and the transference of a number of subjects hitherto belonging to the lawmaking field to that of Governmental decree-making was too much for many politicians.

And the number of those politicians who resent the Government's expanded power is growing. Consider the poll of the 1968 and 1973 Parliaments. Deputies in both Assemblies were asked their positions on three Presidential powers of state:<sup>6</sup>

- 1) The power to dissolve the Assembly
- 2) The power to employ Article 16
- 3) The power to use the Army and Police.

A deputy who agreed that the President should have only number one or none of these three powers, and who wished to enhance the Assembly's power was labelled a Parliamentarian. A Deputy who reconciled the belief for a strong executive with an increase in the role of the Assembly, and who felt that the legislature's main problem is anachronistic rules was

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<sup>4</sup>Dorothy Pickles, The Government and Politics of France, Vol. I (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1973): p. 14.

<sup>5</sup>François Goguel, Alfred Grosser, La Politique en France, (Paris: Colin, 1975): p. 172.

<sup>6</sup>Robert Jackson, Michael Atkinson, Kenneth D. Hart, "Constitutional Conflict in France: Deputies' Attitudes Toward Executive-Legislative Relations," Comparative Politics 9 (July 1977): 407.

labelled an Accomodator. Finally, a Deputy who agreed that the President should have all those powers, that is, one who favored the status quo, was labelled a Presidentialist. Below is how each Assembly was divided.

|                    |       |                                     |        |        |
|--------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|--------|--------|
| 1968               |       | <u>EXECUTIVE POWERS<sup>7</sup></u> |        |        |
|                    |       | Low                                 | High   | Total  |
| <u>LEGISLATIVE</u> | Low   | 0.0%                                | Pres.  |        |
| <u>POWERS</u>      |       | (0)                                 | 38.0%  | 28.0%  |
|                    |       |                                     | (30)   | (30)   |
|                    | High  | Parl.                               | Accom. |        |
|                    |       | 12.7%                               | 49.4%  | 62.0%  |
|                    |       | (10)                                | (39)   | (49)   |
|                    | Total | 12.7%                               | 87.3%  | 100.0% |
|                    |       | (10)                                | (69)   | (79)   |

|                    |       |                         |        |       |
|--------------------|-------|-------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1973               |       | <u>EXECUTIVE POWERS</u> |        |       |
|                    |       | Low                     | High   | Total |
| <u>LEGISLATIVE</u> | Low   | 0.0%                    | Pres.  |       |
| <u>POWERS</u>      |       | (0)                     | 20.5%  | 20.5% |
|                    |       |                         | (16)   | (16)  |
|                    | High  | Parl.                   | Accom. |       |
|                    |       | 41.0%                   | 38.5%  | 79.5% |
|                    |       | (32)                    | (30)   | (62)  |
|                    | Total | 41.0%                   | 59.0%  | 100%  |
|                    |       | (32)                    | (46)   | (78)  |

Pres. -- Presidentialist  
 Accom. - Accomodator  
 Parl. -- Parliamentarian.

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 408.

Clearly, the trend in attitudes toward executive-legislative relations is ~~clearly~~ indicative of a possible confrontation between the two levels of government.<sup>8</sup>

The second criteria<sup>en</sup> of controversy concerns the role of the President. Under the Third Republic, the President was described by an eminent constitutional lawyer as a 'mute and powerless onlooker',<sup>9</sup> and had at one moment risked being, under the Fourth Republic, no more than 'a clerk and a postman',<sup>10</sup> Under the Fifth Republic, he is accorded specific powers to be exercised without a counter-signature and can, under Article 16, assume sole control of the Government in a declared state of emergency. And he alone is the effective judge both of the circumstances justifying his declaration of a state of emergency and of the measures that he proposes to take to deal with it (though he is required to "consult" the constitutional council). The article is known to be one to which General de Gaulle, who was haunted by the impotence of 'the State' under the two previous regimes, attached particular importance.<sup>11</sup>

This reserve power, together with the President's right to dissolve the National Assembly, to accept or refuse a request, either by the Government or by the Deputies, to have a Bill submitted to a referendum instead of to Parliament, and with his election, from 1962 onwards, by the whole electorate, provided a novel combination of quasi-presidential and tradi-

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 415.

<sup>9</sup>Roger Pinto, Éléments de Droit Constitutionnel (Lille: Morel et Corduant, 1952): p. 614.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 615.

<sup>11</sup>LeMonde, 5 June 1958, p. 1.



tional parliamentary government. Indeed Maurice Duverger maintains that this combination has existed in only three other democratic regimes.<sup>12</sup> The two principles are not necessarily incompatible, however, and Maurice Duverger was himself one of the most eloquent proponents of a system that would combine the election of the President of the Republic by universal suffrage with the responsibility of the Government to the National Assembly.<sup>13</sup> As it exists in France under the Fifth Republic, it is, he says, characterized by the President's possession of powers that he can exercise without the need for a counter-signature. The problem created by this presidential power alongside the retention of Governmental responsibility is, he recognizes, that of reconciling the two, 'which is not easy'. And as an illustration of the difficulty, he goes on to ask exactly what the powers of the President are in his capacity of President of the Conseil des Ministres.<sup>14</sup>

His role is certainly not purely formal, as is that of a Parliamentary Head of State, whose presidency of the Conseil des Ministres remains symbolic and whose influence on its decisions is purely moral. On the other hand, he cannot himself make decisions, as does the President of the United States, whose Ministers must bow to his will. Our system lies somewhere between the two. In most cases, it is necessary for there to be agreement between President and Ministers.'

But what if there is not? This problem of the 'executive dyarchy', remained unresolved throughout the presidency of General de Gaulle. M.

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<sup>12</sup>LeMonde, 26 November 1969, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

Pompidou gave his own description of the system in 1970, but without providing any more guidance on the consequences of disagreement between President and Prime Minister.<sup>15</sup>

I think that our Constitution is half-way between a properly presidential regime and a properly Parliamentary regime. The balance between the two -- which is moreover difficult -- has the advantage of making our political system capable of firmness, stability and at the same time of flexibility. As Prime Minister, I have heard General De Gaulle maintain that there was no dyarchy. But on the whole, I think the system is not a bad one.

All of which leaves one to conclude that, ultimately, the issue of where executive power lies may have to be decided by a trial of strength. There is certainly nothing in the text of the Constitution to prevent a President less politically domineering than General de Gaulle or less politically active than President Pompidou from adopting habits more consonant with earlier French Republican traditions. Indeed, Giscard d'Estaing seems to be doing just that. The Constitution of 1958 is flexible enough to be adapted to either a weak or a strong President, provided only that the issue of the division of functions between President and Prime Minister does not become a matter of acute political controversy. But as it stands, and as it was applied during the first twenty years of the regime, nothing in the Constitution could necessarily prevent a clash from developing between a President determined to rule and a Prime Minister determined to use his own powers under articles 20 and 21 to do the same.

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<sup>15</sup>LeMonde, 2 July 1970, p. 1.

But again, what would happen in a conflict between Hôtel Matignon and Elysée? The President would have five options. He could:<sup>16</sup>

- 1) dissolve the new Assembly and hold fresh elections. But this would probably alienate the electorate and result in an even bigger victory for the President's opposition.
- 2) appoint a premier from his opposition and modify his own stance.
- 3) resign on the grounds that the electorate, in voting for a majority opposed to his policies, had nullified the Presidential mandate.
- 4) appoint a minority government and leave it to the Assembly to pass a vote of censure leading to new elections.
- 5) (if it were a narrow loss for the President's coalition) try to maintain a majority by wooing Deputies close to his coalition.

Giscard d'Estaing addressed this very question in his speech at the Burgundian town of Verdun-sur-le-Doubs in early February, 1978. In that speech the depth of his hostility for the Left, clearly more than the Left had bargained for, narrowed the options list considerably. His warning that he could not stop the Left from implementing its political program in the event of a combined Communist-Socialist victory meant that he would not try stitching together alternative coalitions. It is also reasonable to conclude that Giscard would not modify his views.<sup>17</sup>

All in all, Giscard's attitude towards a Leftist victory demonstrated the passion and invective such a conflict could bring. In short, the Fifth Republic is faced with a weakness in its Constitution that has the very real potential for rendering disaster to France.

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<sup>16</sup>Yorick Blumenfeld, "French Elections, 1973," Editorial Research Reports, Vol. I., (February 14, 1973): 124.

<sup>17</sup>Economist, 4 February 1978, p. 49.

PROTEST -- AGGRAVATOR OF PARALYSIS

There are few other nations where protest movements have been so frequent and so diverse in their origins, channels, and purposes, and so similar in their manifestations, as France.

Who are the protesters? There are times in French history when every social group and political organization seems to be protesting against the status quo; in other periods, protest originates in a clearly limited sector of society or politics. If we took a long-term view of France and established a chart of the principal protest movements, their universality would be striking.

If we look at French society as a whole, we find such movements everywhere.

There are protest movements originating among the groups at the bottom of the social hierarchy or of the hierarchy of a particular occupation, aimed at the groups exerting the powers of command.<sup>1</sup> Thus, there have been movements among the workers (the revolutionary syndicalism of the early CGT), the peasants (the wave in 1961), the shopkeepers and artisans (Poujadism and a new wave since 1969), and the small businessmen. Technicians and industrial employees, university students (largely peti-

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<sup>1</sup>This and other ideas are taken from notes of "La Société Contemporaine", French 540, Middlebury College, summer 1979.

bourgeois, or sons of grands bourgeois who were not good enough to join the elite in the grandes écoles), younger (i.e., powerless) members of several professions, and equally powerless students in the lycées all joined in the great protest of May 1968. Lycée students demonstrated again, in May 1973, to protest the suppression of military deferments.

There are protest movements originating also within ruling groups.<sup>2</sup> Some appear within the political class, which has to be subdivided, in turn, into its civilian branch and its military branch. We find protest movements against the domestic status quo or France's international position in the form of the Parti Socialiste Unifié (PSU) and various gauchiste groups today, along with the Communist party since its creation. In 1972, students in the Ecole Nationale d'Administration (ENA), the incubator of the bureaucratic elite, protested en masse against the competitive system that reserved access to the grands corps to the ENA's top graduates. There were also spectacular expression of protest in the French Army during the Algerian war, culminating in a revolt against de Gaulle in Algeria in April, 1961. The third element of the ruling groups, the Church hierarchy and the intellectuals, has also been a source of protest;<sup>3</sup> the Church was a powerful force for protest in the early years of the Third Republic and again at the time of the separation of Church and State; as for the intellectuals, some groups among them -- at times all of them -- have been sharply critical of French political and social affairs.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Protest movements are sometimes organized (whether by political parties, interest groups, or conspiratorial groups like the Organisation de l'Armée Secrète in Algeria and France in 1961-62), sometimes not.<sup>4</sup>

In the latter case, they appear either as sudden explosions (the abortive Putsch of April 1961), or as the expression of similar attitudes held by men acting within their professions (bankers and businessmen, writers and journalists). The 'events' of May 1968 combined both these elements.

Gabriel Almond has commented on the "poor boundary maintenance between the society and the political system in France"; he has emphasized in particular the lack of a clear separation between the functions of interest groups and those of political parties.<sup>5</sup> The "interpenetration" of these two types of bodies appears in a number of instances. Some Frenchmen carry their protest against the status quo into a party as well as into an interest group. Almond's remark may be less applicable to the majorité side of French politics under the Fifth Republic, but he is right about the opposition side:<sup>6</sup> in 1960-61, opposition to the Algerian war was led by an essentially non-Communist left-wing coalition composed of unions, a small party (the PSU), the National Students Union, study groups (the Club Jean Moulin), and intellectuals. In May-June 1968, especially at the end of May, a shaky conglomeration of left-wing parties, labor unions, student groups and intellectuals tried to overthrow the long Gaullist reign.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Gabriel Almond and James S. Coleman, The Politics of Developing Areas (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960); pp. 37-38.

<sup>6</sup>Middlebury College Notes.

Within the political parties we find two structures particularly adapted to the expression of protest: the small ideological sect, usually dominated by intellectuals, which buys intellectual rigidity and purity at the cost of extremism and isolation; and the authoritarian league, which tries to enlist masses of people in quasi-military fashion behind much more ambiguous objectives.<sup>7</sup>

Within the interest groups, we find that protest affects all the types of "interest articulation" distinguished by Almond.<sup>8</sup> It affects institutional interest groups, such as the Army or the Church; nonassociational groups, such as the occasional, usually short-lived, study groups that criticize the status quo and try to propose alternatives; associational interest groups, such as the peasants' organizations, the French labor movement, with its long history of resistance to any form of cooperation with business, and the multiple unions of students and teachers in 1968; and anomic groups breaking into the political system from society, such as Poujade's.

The issues that give rise to protest have been of all sorts. Some have been social issues concerning the status of given groups in French society; some have been national issues concerning the role of France in the world and the policy to be followed by the country toward other nations. French survival was the original issue around which Resistance movements were formed; that was also the issue in the protest movement of

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<sup>7</sup>Stanley Hoffman, Decline or Renewal: France Since the 1930s, (New York: Viking Press, 1974): p. 113.

<sup>8</sup>Gabriel Almond & James S. Coleman, The Politics of Developing Nations. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960): pp. 37-38.

extreme right elements against de Gaulle's Algerian policy. National issues were heavily at stake in the Poujade movement. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there have been constitutional issues concerning the institutions which the nation ought to adopt. Finally, philosophical issues were at the heart of the intellectuals' protest against the 'consumer society' in recent years. Intellectual protest movements, such as that of the "left-wing progressive intellectual" denounced by Raymond Aron or that of the intellectuals opposed to the Algerian war, usually develop around a mixture of all such issues. The nationwide movement of May, 1968, did also.

How does protest occur in France? It might appear that everything is being lumped under the heading of protest, even some kinds of expressions of discontent that have little in common. However, it seems that whatever the social milieu in which they originated, whatever the channels they used or created, and whatever the issues involved, those movements have shared a common style.

The first feature of this style is its bellicosity.<sup>9</sup> True, any protest is first of all a refusal to accept a certain situation. In this respect Poujadists or the intellectuals who signed the 'Manifesto of the 121', recognizing the right of young men to disobey the draft in the Algerian war, are not different from American Populists. But the style of protest differs according to whether this original refusal is or is not followed by something. What characterizes almost all French protest movements is their refusal to cooperate with the 'enemy' (i.e., the group responsible for the measures or state of affairs against which the protest is lodged) in order to produce a desired change.

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<sup>9</sup>Middlebury College Notes.



At best (if this is the right word), the protest movement will advocate a revolutionary substitution of a new order of things.<sup>10</sup> This was the case with the French labor movement at the turn of the century and with the French Communist Party in its early, militant years. In a confused but more violent way, this seemed to be the case with the terrorist organizations and army conspiracies that opposed de Gaulle's Algerian policy. And in May 1968, there were many, often conflicting calls for a new order, ranging from the Communists' belated appeal for a new popular government to varieties of student utopianism displayed in the 'liberated' halls of the Sorbonne.

At worst, and more frequently, the protest movement will simply try to sabotage public policy and practice a negative "politique du pire," against which the movement fights.<sup>11</sup> The behavior of some elements of the French Army after de Gaulle announced his policy of self-determination for Algeria showed an inclination to oppose and block official policy in the absence of any realistic alternative. And in 1968 the determination of various gauchiste student organizations to exacerbate tensions in the university, to sabotage reform and thus to 'unveil' the repressiveness of even liberal institutions, brought first chaos, and later protracted turmoil in and around Paris. French protest is the rejection of reform; its purpose is not so much to redress a wrong as to punish the wrongdoer.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Another feature of French protest is what Hoffmann calls "totalism", and it applies to the ideological dimension adopted by practically any protest movement.<sup>13</sup> Any French protest movement expresses its hostility in terms that go far beyond the immediate occasion of the protest and that challenge or involve the very foundations of the social order, the political order, or both. Marxism colored many of the attacks on the Algerian war and still does on the Fifth Republic, which is broadened into a general assault on French and foreign capitalism. The nationalists of the 1950s not only protested against France's colonial retreats and her minor role in NATO, they often spoke as if there were a universal conspiracy to humiliate France -- a conspiracy in which Communist inspiration, Arab hostility, and Anglo-Saxon malevolence all played a part. (L'Aurore, and many RPF, Poujadist, and other right-wing speakers and writers took this line.)<sup>14</sup> A shopkeepers' rebellion against harsher measures of tax control rapidly became a call for resistance against France's decline in the world and for the summoning of a new States General.<sup>15</sup> A long if grudging practice of 'reformism' has not succeeded in erasing the basic hostility of the labor movement to a syndicalisme de gestion, which would imply not so much the abandonment of its grievances, as the explicit recognition of the 'capitalist' order of society. The Communists unions' tough bargaining for quantitative advantages for the workers proceeds behind the banner of anticapitalism and the class struggle. The non-Communist CFDT's demand for

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<sup>13</sup>Stanley Hoffman, Decline or Renewal: France Since the 1930s. (New York: Viking Press, 1974); p. 113.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

'workers' power' in the factories is presented as a springboard toward a socialist new order, not as a step toward integration; it appeals to the lingering memories of early antistate, workshop-centered syndicalism which Pierre-Joseph Proudhon wanted.<sup>16</sup> The skilled workers, employers, and cadres of the Confédération Française et Démocratique du Travail (CFDT) thus appear closer to the artisan elite of early French syndicalism than to British or West German trade unionism; autogestion is certainly not 'participation' in the existing order.<sup>17</sup>

One of the consequences of this 'total' attitude is to reinforce the intransigence that results from the negative character of the protest.<sup>18</sup> Another consequence is that protest battles are waged in moral terms;<sup>19</sup> the moralism so characteristic of French intellectuals pervades all French protest movements; the French argue about principles, not about interests; they appeal to notions of good and evil or to traditional values.

Both the universality and the style of French protest result from the nature of French society and of France's political system. The nature of French society, as it existed from the Revolution until recently, created the conditions for many of the types of protest.

Society rested on a consensus that included the 'haute bourgeoisie,' the lower middle classes (both independent operators and civil servants or employees), as well as the peasants.<sup>20</sup> This consensus tended to preserve

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<sup>16</sup>Middlebury College Notes.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

largely preindustrial values and attitudes and to dilute or delay industrialization. It excluded the industrial proletariat and created a major psychological barrier between the workers and the rest of the population. In particular, the bourgeoisie insisted on applying 'bourgeois' standards of social ascent (enrichissez-vous) to the workers and on treating them according to the degree of loyalty they showed toward their employers -- one of the many aspects of the feudal hangover among the bourgeoisie.<sup>21</sup> The social distance -- i.e., differences in income, education, way of life -- between the workers and the bourgeois may have been far less than in England, but the intellectual distance (mutual acceptance and behavior) was greater, especially since it was increased by the contrast between the bourgeois' treatment of the workers and the bourgeois' community of values with, mystical glorification of, and legal protection for the peasants.<sup>22</sup> The result was that the workers could not but adopt an attitude of protest against the established order and dream of revolution or revenge. By contrast with the protest of most other groups, which usually express a reaction of individual self-assertion or of defense of the 'free' individual against evil forces, workers' protests expressed a sense of community, a desire for collective ascent and redemption (in May 1968, this made any genuine student-worker alliance difficult). But the numerical inferiority of the workers also made their dream a rather hopeless one; here are the roots of the aforementioned negativism, and totalism.

Other forms of protest can be explained by the nature of the French political system. The fundamental factor here was the lasting split in

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

French political thought following the Revolution, or rather the double split.<sup>23</sup> To begin with, there was the opposition between those Frenchmen who remained faithful to counterrevolutionary ideas and those who accepted the principle of government based on consent. And in addition, there was a division among the latter: between the liberals, who feared that any system of government in which the 'will of the people' was not carefully filtered and diluted would upset the stalemated society, to which they were attached above all; the democrats, who were also attached to it but whose social conservatism was less fearful and whose respect for traditional elites was nil; and the social reformers who rejected the formula of the stalemated society altogether.

Because of the split in French political thought, and also because of the instability of regimes in the nineteenth century, the electoral laws and parliamentary rules of the Third Republic, and France's economic and social complexity, France developed a multiple and heterogeneous party system. The very divisions on the French political scene and the resulting difficulty in forming stable coalitions condemned the political system to immobility at important times. Any group which felt that action was vital has tended to organize a protest movement in order to break the existing deadlock.

This is why it has seemed, at times, that all organizations are engaged in protest of one kind or another, pulling a paralyzed state in different directions. Resulting from the nonpragmatism and nonreformism of a fragmented political system, protest groups seem the only alternative

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

to complete stagnation, but they also contribute to the system's weakness.<sup>24</sup>

As long as the present authority system lasts, protest will persist. As long as better ways of change are blocked, crisis remains the best alarm bell. Never was this better demonstrated than in 1968.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Stanley Hoffman, Decline or Renewal: France Since the 1930s. (New York: Viking Press, 1974); p. 120.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

## INHERITORS OF PROTEST

### The Communist Party

The French Communist Party, one inheritor of the protest tradition, must be studied first not only because it constitutes the sole stable and constantly powerful formation since 1945, nor because it occupies one of the extremities of the political spectrum, but because the behavior of the voters and the other parties, especially the other possessors of the protest tradition, the Socialists, are to a large degree determined by the PCF's existence, and because the PCF's presence gives a certain number of features peculiar to France.<sup>1</sup>

Contrary to what happened in other countries, such as Germany, Italy, and first of all Russia, the PCF was not born from a minority branch of the Socialist Party. In December 1920, at the Congress of Tours, it was the majority of the SFIO which decided to adhere to the Third International, the Comintern, and to accept the 21 conditions that the Second Congress of the International had just drawn up. The decisive vote was 3,028 to 1,022.<sup>2</sup> Among those conditions were strict subordination to the decisions of the International and the changing of its name. Founded by Jean Jaures, L'Humanité remained the central organ of the party. Four fifths of the

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<sup>1</sup>François Borella, Les partis politiques dans la France d'aujourd'hui, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1977): p. 175.

<sup>2</sup>François Goguel and Alfred Grosser, La politique en France (Paris: Colin, 1975): p. 98.

members accepted the change. The others followed Léon Blum who recreated the SFIO. Thus the PCF can claim to be the direct descendant of pre-war socialism.<sup>3</sup>

Since, according to the statutes of the Comintern, "The proletariat of all countries have found for the first time in the USSR a true homeland" and since "the international proletariat has a duty to contribute to the success of the edification of socialism in the USSR and to defend it by every means available against the attacks of the capitalist powers", the PCF was faithfully married to the caprices of Soviet policy regardless of the consequences. For example, in the elections of 1932, the first since the Comintern imposed ultragauchism, that is to say, isolation and denunciation of the socialists as "social-Fascists",<sup>4</sup> the PCF lost a quarter of its adherents. After the arrival of Hitler to power, this policy changed, albeit little by little. The PCF set the example to the other members of the International by concluding in July 1934 a pact of unity with the SFIO. After the Franco-Soviet pact of May 1935 came the development of the Popular Front with the Socialists and the Radicals. In the Assembly elections of April-May 1936, the Communists, with 1,470,000 votes, almost doubled their previous totals and went from 10 seats to 72, thanks to the second-ballot alliances: the scrutin uninominal à deux tours played for or against the Communists depending on their relations with the other parties.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Maurice Duverger, Partis politiques et classes sociales en France (Paris: Colin, 1955): p. 53.

<sup>5</sup>Howard Machin and Vincent Wright, "The French Left Under the Fifth Republic," Comparative Politics 10 (October 1977): 38.



The Parti communiste supported the government of Léon Blum without participating in it. The Popular Front was already in shambles when the Communists' approval of the German-Soviet Pact of 1939 ushered in a period of isolation and secrecy. It also ushered in denunciations by Communists of the "guerre imperialiste". These ended with the attack of Germany against the USSR in June, 1941. The party then took part in the Resistance, having already been well-versed in clandestine activity. At the Liberation, General de Gaulle had the Communists enter the government where, after the elections of October, 1945, they obtained five million votes (26 percent), and led the Ministries of Equipment, Commerce, and Interior. Maurice Thorez, Minister of State, gave the order to his comrades upon his return from the Soviet Union in 1944: "faire la guerre, créer une puissante armée française, reconstruire l'industrie, s'unir".

The period from 1944 to 1947 is particularly important in understanding the situation of the PCF. In the first place, its spectacular rise is explained by the possibilities of infiltration that the Resistance had given to it. Secondly, the economic and social progress, made at a time when the Franco-Soviet alliance had been confirmed by a treaty and when the Russian armies had repulsed the Nazis, also could not be denied. Thus in later years, the Party's permanent negativism, its purely destructive will with which it struck at the U.S. or at Germany did not make sense to millions of French.<sup>6</sup> Instead they remember that the two great moments of progress in social legislation in the twentieth century had been in 1936 and 1945-46 and that the mobilization of the PCF's energies

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<sup>6</sup> François Goguel and Alfred Grosser, La politique en France (Paris: Colin, 1975): p. 98.

for reconstruction of France had been extremely effective. Finally the party itself to this day has guarded a deep nostalgia for the period when it shared power.

On May 5, 1947, the PCF's ministers were excluded from the Ramadier Government for violating ministerial unity. Later its delegates at the Constitutional Assembly of the Cominform in September spoke proudly of the successful reconstruction and said that an energetic recalling to order of the party so that the PCF could accept the division of the world in two was necessary. They also warned that this division gave to the social movements (including the PCF) a penchant for violence without precedent.<sup>7</sup> A chasm was thus again created between the Communists and the other political organizations. It deepened when the communists expressed some attitudes which were particularly shocking: branding Tito a "Fascist", or commending the repression in Budapest. The PCF cooled its rhetoric a little when, on some international problems or domestic problems, a sentiment very strongly anticommunist surfaced in other groups.

The deStalinization of the USSR and the atmosphere of international detente facilitated the work of the party, but the PCF did not seem to know how to profit from it. In spite of its mass of followers, the devotion of its militants, the skill of a propaganda machine which knew how to tie the daily difficulties of the "little people" to the great worldwide problems of the day, the PCF appeared to be une formation vieillie et sclerosée. Maurice Thorez had been Secretary General since the Thirties and by 1964 had been around for thirty years. He occupied this post until the

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<sup>7</sup>Ronald Tiersky, French Communism 1920-1972 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974): p. 163.

Seventeenth Congress, in May 1964, when he was named President, an honorific post which disappeared at his death several weeks later, July 11. His successor to the General Secretariat was Waldeck-Rochet, born in 1905. Yet the party changed little. The numerous internal purges (Marty-Tillon in 1952-53; Lecoeur in 1954, Hervé in 1956-57, Servin-Casanova in 1961), the refusal or the incapacity to support a stimulating intellectual dialogue similar to the Italian Communist Party, and the rigidity of its beliefs progressively weakened the PCF's vote-getting and mobilization powers. The arrival of de Gaulle to power made the PCF lose a good part of its clientele: from 5.1 and 5.5 million votes in 1951 and 1956, it declined to 3.9 and 4 million votes in 1958 and 1962.

The PCF's resurgence in the legislative elections of March 5, 1967 (the level of 5 million votes was crossed again) was especially due to the fact that the party was beginning to depart from its traditional <sup>ghetto</sup> ~~heritage~~ on the edges of the political spectrum. The PCF, through speeches of its leaders and informal agreements with other Leftist Parties at lower levels, seemed to indicate a desire to return to the political mainstream. It is difficult to express exactly when this began, but suffice it to say that there are three possible causes, distinct yet tied together: the evolution of the party itself, the transformation of the image that kept it away from the electorate -- a transformation due in large part to the policy of "rapprochement" with the Soviet Union practiced by General de Gaulle -- and the change in the attitude of other Leftist groups. For example, in November 1962, M. Mollet asked Socialist voters to vote Communist on the second ballot, given the choice between the PCF and the Gaullists. The first formal accord between the SFIO and the PCF, a regional accord, was

made January 5, 1965, for the municipal elections of the Seine area. The Presidential election of that year, with the presentation of a single leftist candidate, considerably accelerated the process. On December 21, 1966, a common declaration between the PCF and the Fédération de la Gauche was published after several days of negotiations. The elections of March, 1967, showed that Federation voters were generally accepting the FGDS order to vote for the Communists on the second ballot. On February 24, 1968, after several months of work, a type of common platform was published which emphasized the points of agreement, without hiding their differences. The largest disagreement concerned the Middle East; 1967 had been the year of the Six Day War, and the PCF had taken a violently anti-Israel view, while the Socialists by and large supported Israel.

The Arab-Israeli conflict could have hindered the PCF in its dialogue with other parties, but it did not. It was another story with the invasion of Czechoslovakia. On April 22, 1968, L'Humanité wrote, "Five socialist countries -- the USSR, Poland, the GDR, Hungary, and Bulgaria -- are intervening militarily in Czechoslovakia. The PCF expresses its surprise and disapproval".<sup>8</sup> That last phrase had been taken out of a declaration published the day before by the Political Bureau. For the first time in its history, the PCF clearly dissociated itself from a Soviet action. It could have proved to be the beginning of a long process which would liberate the PCF from an onerous handicap, but nothing ever came of it afterward. In spite of the noise from intellectuals like Roger Garaudy, a member of the Political Bureau, and Louis Aragon, a member of the Central Committee, the Party's position was more and more disposed to silence. L'Humanité

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<sup>8</sup>L'Humanité, 22 April 1968, p. 1.

quickly ceased commenting on it, or even giving news about the events of that "springtime in Prague".

The destruction by the Soviet Union of a socialist system which was reclaiming its liberty gravely affected the dialogue between the Communists and other parties.<sup>9</sup> Later, the crisis of May '68 showed all too painfully for communists that the party had cut itself off from the young radicals. In May-June 1968, the party was forced to reveal its true self. This true self had two aspects. On the one hand, the fiction of the CGT's independence from the party was disposed of: the double role of Georges Séguy and of Henry Krasucki in being both of the union and of the PCF's Political Bureau was an important element in the evolution of the crisis. On the other hand, the party which for nearly half a century had clamored for revolution appeared to be fundamentally hostile to revolutionary action. Not only did the CGT try and succeed -- better than the government -- in maintaining at least some order amidst the economic and social chaos which beset France, but the Party welcomed with a manifest sigh of relief the announcement of the dissolution of the Assembly; the Party was, it thought, going to be able to look for and obtain new voters, who conformed more to its real aspirations than the revolutionary conquest of power.<sup>10</sup>

Paradoxically, the weakening due to the double shock of 1968 (the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the party's behavior of May/June in deceiving young revolutionaries without preventing the electoral triumph of Gaullism

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<sup>9</sup>François Goguel and Alfred Grosser, La Politique en France (Paris: Colin, 1975): p. 101.

<sup>10</sup>Ronald Tiersky, French Communism 1920-1972 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974): p. 253.

was strongly felt by both the left and right of the Party) contained the elements of a new departure.<sup>11</sup> Solidly structured, the party was able to welcome the 'gauchistes' repelled by the weakness and the spontaneity or the lack of infiltration in the working place. At the same time its behavior was able to serve as a strong concrete demonstration of its decisive support of majority democracy, which made more creditable an overture toward the Non-Communist Left.

This overture, accompanied by a change in style, was developed in an almost continuous fashion under the direction of a new leader. On February, 1970, at the 19th Congress, George Marchais became de facto Secretary General and replaced an ailing Waldeck-Rochet. Marchais was named Secretary General de jure at the Twentieth Congress, in December 1972, his predecessor receiving the title of honorable President.

Marchais, a mechanic, born on June 7, 1920, did not enter the party until 1947, after having exercised considerable responsibility in a CGT metallurgical local. His rise was rapid: Secretary of the CGT and deputy member of the Central Committee in 1956, member of the Central Committee and of the Political Bureau in 1959, Secretary charged with organizing workers in 1961. His personality -- rather authoritarian -- and his aura as a hard man did not seem to qualify him particularly well for negotiation and persuasion, so in 1969 the Party chose Jacques Duclos to carry their banner in the Presidential election.

Nevertheless, Georges Marchais succeeded exceedingly well in steering the party out of its ghetto. First there was the period of talks with the

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<sup>11</sup> François Goguel and Alfred Grosser, La politique en France (Paris: Colin, 1975): p. 102.

Socialist Party transformed by Alain Savary. Then, after a brief period of disdain, the PCF had talks in 1971, with the New Secretary of the PS, François Mitterrand, for the preparation of a Program<sup>me</sup> commun du gouvernement. Signed June 27, 1972, this long document, divided into four parts (Vivre mieux, changer la vie, Démocratiser l'économie, développer le secteur public, planifier le progrès, Démocratiser les institutions, garantir et développer les libertés, Contribuer à la paix et développer la coopération internationale), contained affirmations of principle as well as very precise commitments whose costly implementation already appeared to be bringing out difficulties between them in that period of economic expansion. But the Programme commun had the immense advantage of sealing an alliance which went beyond an electoral agreement and affirmed the shift towards liberalism in the Party.<sup>12</sup> There will be more on the Program<sup>me</sup> commun later.

Although the Programme commun is seen as a kind of sacred charter, the Party let François Mitterrand keep himself at arm's length from them during the Presidential campaign of 1974.<sup>13</sup> Their goal in consigning themselves to the shadows was to help Mitterrand enlarge his overture not only to other Socialists and leftist radicals (MRG), but to Gaullists disappointed by the failure of Jacques Chaban-Delmas.

By itself, such a docile attitude is not news. The PCF had already practiced in the course of the twenties, thirties and forties, 'les diverses

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<sup>12</sup>Ray Macridis, "The French CP's Many Faces," Problems of Communism 25 (May-June 1976): 60.

<sup>13</sup>Jack Hayward and Vincent Wright, "'Les Deux France' and the French Presidential Election of May 1974," Parliamentary Affairs 27 (Summer 1974): p. 216.



tactiques possibles: going it alone, joining the Popular Front, and joining the National Front.<sup>14</sup>

Regarding the party's internal structure, the key is still democratic centralism. The party's statutes say, "Discussion of all problems, is free at all levels, provided it is based on principles accepted by communists. Once decisions are taken by the majority, they are applicable to all. The organization and activity of factions are prohibited . . . . The leadership organs at different levels of the Party are elected democratically by the Assemblies . . . and the Congress. The decisions of the upper levels are obligatory for the lower levels".<sup>15</sup> In practice, if discussion which does not put in doubt communist principles is freer than before in the 21,163 cells existing in October, 1974, (of which 6,512 were in factories and schools, 9,340 were in localities and 5,311 were in rural areas), the Congress has nevertheless kept the ritual assembling and taking of meaningless votes. The Central Committee (90 members and 25 deputies after the Congress of 1972) and especially the Political Bureau (19 members) and the Secretariat (the General Secretary and five other Secretaries), all of whom remain supercilious and suspicious, still hold power which cannot be contested.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>François Goguel and Alfred Grosser, La politique en France (Paris: Colin, 1975): p. 102.

<sup>15</sup>François Borella, Les partis politiques dans la France d'aujourd'hui (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1977): p. 181.

<sup>16</sup>François Goguel and Alfred Grosser, La politique in France (Paris: Colin, 1975): p. 102.



The Party has undergone a definite sociological transformation.<sup>17</sup> It has remained largely a party of workers, but it is reinforced now by engineers and managers, while the number of farmers and farm workers has steadily declined. It has of late been more open to women who compose roughly one-third of the party -- but there are only two women on the Political Bureau. Rejuvenated by a large number of young people, it continues to offer its members something more than a medium for political action; it offers a kind of extended family, a group giving one a sense of belonging and of protection against the ills of life.

Since 1934, the PCF has wanted to be rooted in a national and republican tradition. Thus, there is a tendency to downplay this sub-culture role. This tendency is also because it is nearly impossible to maintain it today; communication, notably that of television, does not permit such isolation. Finally, this tendency is because the PCF, being totally opposed to the Maoist example imitated in France by an intellectual left-wing group, now believes that there exists "a rich culture of which the proletariat has been deprived and should enjoy".<sup>18</sup> For example, the presence of Impressionist Painting at the Fête de l'Humanité in September 1974 marked the total rupture with the period of 'socialist realism'.<sup>19</sup>

Yet the PCF's signals remain ambiguous. Consider this passage from La Nouvelle redaction des status.

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<sup>17</sup>Philippe Broyer, Didier Cassan, Olivier DeLage, "Les candidates communistes aux elections legislatives de 1973 et 1978," Revue Francaise de Science Politique 29 (avril 1979): 213.

<sup>18</sup>François Goguel and Alfred Grosser, La politique en France (Paris: Colin, 1975): p. 104.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

The Communist Party is the party of the working class in France. It brings together workers, peasants, intellectuals, and all those who desire to act for the triumph of the cause of socialism, of communism.

The Communist Party has as its most important goal the transformation of capitalist society into a collectivist or communist society.

The Communist Party believes that the liberation of the French people from the chains of exploitation demands the destruction of any form of the dictatorship of capital and the conquest of political power by the working class, in a tightly-knit alliance with the peasantry and the ensemble of the masses.<sup>20</sup>

Two interpretations, opposed to each other, but not necessarily incompatible are possible: (1) the text veils the Party's real intentions better than in the past, or (2) the text still contains magical words which the Party itself no longer believes, just as the social-democratic parties of other countries have for a long time respectfully conserved their Marxist terminology. For sure, the questions that these two interpretations raise are asked in places other than France, notably in Portugal and Italy. Nevertheless, what is specifically French is the dialogue between a massive but stagnant Communist Party (it has remained around 20% of the vote) and a socialist party still poorly structured, but potentially more than a force of equilibrium for the Left.

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<sup>20</sup>Quoted in Ibid.

### The Socialist Party

In the late 1960s, after the 'election de la peur', the French Socialists, the other inheritors of the protest tradition, began their newest search for a model political party. Such a party would be socialist but pragmatic. It would be oriented toward industrial workers but hospitable to other social groups. It would be in favor of drastic economic changes but keep its commitment to traditional democratic principles. It would subject itself to an infusion of new blood into the leadership structure but not dispense with the counsel of old mentors who represented continuity. It would, finally, be equally receptive to collaboration with other forces of the Left without being absorbed by them and losing its uniqueness.<sup>21</sup>

The first practical effort at the creation of such a party occurred at a congress in Alfortville on May 4-6, 1969. This congress was convoked by the Comité directeur of the SFIO, which had invited the party's regional federations and other interested political formations. There was uncertainty whether the new party would indeed be socialist, whether it was actually about to be established, and finally, whether the Alfortville group could be properly regarded as a constituent congress. The optimistic contention of Andre Laurens that the Socialist party was born officially on May 6, and that it was not merely the old SFIO wrapped in a new cloak, was lent some substance by the fact that in the weeks preceding Alfortville a number of departmental SFIO federations (such as that of Hauts-de-Seine)

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<sup>21</sup>Pierre Joxe, Parti socialiste (Paris: EPI, 1973): p. 13.

had formally dissolved.<sup>22</sup> Secondly, despite the fact that most of the leaders of the 'vieille maison' (such as Defferre, Fuzier, Quilliot, and Chandernagor) figured prominently in the debates, there were many new faces of young persons <sup>who had</sup> ~~having~~ recently joined the party. Moreover, there were numerous representatives of the Radical party, the CIR, the UCRG, several clubs, and even a few former members of the PSU. Altogether it was a delegation claiming to represent more than 87,000 members, as contrasted to the old SFIO's last membership of 30,000.

On the other hand, it could be plausibly argued that the gathering was, with a few changes, essentially the same old SFIO. In the first place, most of the CIR, as well as the UCGS and the Radicals, had at the outset refused to participate in Alfortville. The Radicals still insisted that the old Federation was not quite dead and buried while the CIR contested the validity of the congress itself, arguing that a genuine constituent body could meet only if it consisted of delegates from specially elected departmental assemblies.

Secondly, the circumstances surrounding the selection of Gaston Defferre as the new party's candidate for president of the Republic made it seem as if that party was little more than the old SFIO in new clothes. Defferre had announced that he wished to be a candidate. In spite of Mollet's misgivings that Defferre would make any future alliance with the Communists difficult if not impossible, his candidacy had been approved by the Comité directeur of the SFIO (without prior consultation with the FGDS or

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<sup>22</sup>Christiane Hurtig, De la SFIO au nouveau parti socialiste (Paris: Colin, 1970): p. 18.

the CIR).<sup>23</sup> Another name that was proposed was that of Alain Savary, a former member of the SFIO who had quit the party in 1958 in protest against Mollet's decision to support de Gaulle and his regime. Still, Mollet appeared to prefer Savary as a presidential candidate because his outlook was reminiscent of the generalities embraced so often by the old SFIO. Savary favored 'the restoration and the scrupulous defense of public liberties'; the building of a 'modern economy'; the construction of a 'just society,' which would overcome the failures of capitalism in housing, education and health; the allocation of priorities for national education; and the conduct of a foreign policy based upon impartiality, peace, and international cooperation.<sup>24</sup> This platform was obviously considered ideologically acceptable socialism, since Savary received the support of certain old SFIO leaders, notably Fuzier and Jaquet, who were against revisionism. Yet after considerable confusion, Defferre's candidacy -- which he graciously announced was utterly dependent upon the congress' approval -- was endorsed by 2,032 out of the total 3,370 votes.<sup>25</sup>

Notwithstanding this sizeable margin, it could in no way be said that Defferre was the best choice of the congress, that his candidacy was conducive to the unity or electoral effectiveness of the non-Communist Left, or that it augured well for the new Socialist party. The very choice of Defferre widened the split within the non-Communist Left. The Defferrists, led by Chandernagor, Quilliot, and other old members of the SFIO's Comité directeur, argued that a republican candidate the stature

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<sup>23</sup>LeMonde, 6 May 1969, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>LeMonde, 3 May 1969, p. 1.

of the mayor of Marseilles was necessary in order to obviate the danger of being too closely identified with, or dependent upon, the PCF, a party which had certainly not endeared itself to the electorate by its position on the events in Czechoslovakia. It was also argued that Defferre's candidacy would make it easier for the non-Communist Left to capture many moderate votes that might otherwise go to Alain Poher, the acting president of the Republic who had become the official candidate of the Democratic Center party.

The anti-Defferrists, led at Alfortville by Fuzier, contended that the new Socialist party would harm its image by opening itself too easily to the Center; that such an opening would make electoral collaboration with the Communists impossible and would make even a discourse with that party difficult; and that it was absolutely necessary, if the Gaullists were to be beaten, to have a common candidate for the entire Left as in 1965. It was also argued that Defferre's conception of the presidency as a policy-making office was too close for comfort to that of the Gaullists. The anti-Defferrists and supporters of a common candidate for the Left included Savary (who, incidentally, shared Defferre's idea of the presidency); the president (Charles Hernu) and most of the other leaders of the CIR; the CGT and CFDT, the two most radical trade unions; the SFIO Federation de Deux-Sevres; the Fédération des groupes témoignage chrétien; François Mitterand, the leader of the now defunct FGDS; the UGCS; and, of course, the PSU.

The PCF and the PSU immediately made good their threats to nominate their own candidates for the presidency. The CIR, which objected both to the premature establishment of a new party and to the choice of Defferre

(which it had considered a *fait accompli* engineered by the old establishment of the SFIO) held its own congress at Saint-Gratien, at which the major event was a vigorous speech by Mitterrand defending his thesis of the need for a common candidate for the entire Left and attacking the exclusivist activities of the congress at Alfortville. A meeting hastily arranged between delegations of Alfortville and Saint-Gratien to achieve a compromise (which could only mean the withdrawal of Defferre's candidacy) was in vain -- and all the CIR congress could do was to pass a resolution (by now quite meaningless) expressing confidence in Mitterrand.

Thus despite Pierre Mauroy's optimistic declaration that, as of May 6, "there no longer is an SFIO, an UCRG, or a CIR,"<sup>26</sup> there remained the old tactical confusions and opportunistic behavior of the separate formations and their leaders. This was particularly true of the old SFIO. Mollet (who had been relatively silent at Alfortville) now publicly favored Defferre's candidacy, irrespective of his disagreement with the mayor of Marseilles on his conception of the presidency. Before Alfortville, Mollet had refused to have any kind of entente with the Communists; now, however, his position became more 'gauchisante'. Thus Mollet indicated that if there were to be a runoff between Pompidou and Duclos, Mollet would advise Socialists to vote for the Communist.<sup>27</sup> This peculiar stand by Mollet was perhaps meant to weaken the appeal of the PCF; to curry favor with the Socialist party's militant rank and file (and thus to regain his leadership of the party); or to undermine Defferre's position. Perhaps he

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<sup>26</sup>LeMonde, 6 May 1969, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup>François Goguel and Alfred Grosser, La politique en France (Paris: Colin, 1975): p. 108.



also needed to emphasize the new party's leftism in order to counter-balance Defferre's announcement in mid-May that, if elected president, he would choose Mendès-France, rather than a Socialist, as premier. If so, that tactic was surely nullified when Defferre hedged in answering the question whom he would support in the case of a second-ballot contest between Pompidou and Communist leader Duclos. Defferre persisted in his refusal to believe that either candidate could obtain a majority. However, the party, being more pragmatic, indicated somewhat prematurely that if Defferre failed to win on the first ballot or to get on the second ballot, it would support Alain Poher. Duclos immediately branded Defferre as 'Poher's water boy.'<sup>28</sup> The unity of the non-Communist Left, and therefore Defferre's potency as a candidate, were certainly not enhanced by the fact that many federations of the old SFIQ and many local sections still refused to adhere to the new party. They considered Defferre's<sup>e's</sup> nomination null and void and hoped that a unitary candidate of the entire Left would be chosen at the last moment.

The first ballot of the Presidential election, on June 1, 1969, was an absolute disaster for the Socialist party and its candidate, who received slightly over 5 percent of the total vote and was thus effectively eliminated from the second ballot. Nor did the 'provisional executive committee's' definite second-ballot endorsement of Poher help the party's socialist image.

Pompidou's victory on June 15 was due in large measure to the PCF's decision to abstain on the second ballot. It was also due to the

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<sup>28</sup>LeMonde, 6 May 1969, p. 1.



disorganization of the non-Communist Left. Charles Hernu, the leader of the CIR, said: "If I were in Pompidou's place, I would send a telegram to those who had assembled at Alfortville, because it is due to them, . . . that he has been elected. They had provoked the division of the Left. They had thought that a centrist candidate would do better."<sup>29</sup> Other, more forward-looking leaders were ready to start anew. While Mitterrand announced his intention to undertake a tour of France to gather up all Socialist groupings at grass-roots levels, the leaders of the old SFIO and the organizers of the Alfortville congress decided to hold another, and presumably more decisive, constituent congress.

That congress, held at Issy-les-Moulineaux on July 11-13, definitely established the organizational framework of the new Socialist party (Parti socialiste - PS). One of the first decisions of the congress was to retain the basic structure of the SFIO, with its National Congress, whose delegates were chosen by constituent regional federation, its Permanent Bureau, and its Comité directeur.<sup>30</sup> The congress elected a Comité directeur of sixty-one individuals, about fifty of whom had belonged to the SFIO, and thirty-three of whom were holdovers from the SFIO's Comité directeur. Four members came from leftist clubs, two had been Radicals, and one had belonged to the CIR.<sup>31</sup>

The position of secretary-general (now called 'first secretary') was retained, but it was understood that he was to be less a leader than

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<sup>29</sup>LeMonde, 16 June 1969, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup>LeMonde, 13 July 1969, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup>Dorothy Pickles, The Government and Politics of France, Vol. I (London: Methuen, 1972): pp. 383-384.

a mouthpiece of a collective leadership reflecting the diversity of elements within the new PS. The newly appointed first secretary, Alain Savary, embodied that diversity. Like so many other Socialists, he had abandoned the SFIO in opposition to Mollet's acquiescence to the Gaullist regime and had joined the PSU. He subsequently led a leftist organization, the Union des clubs pour le renouvellement de la gauche (UCRG), which he brought into the newly formed PS.

There was some disagreement about whether Savary was 'Mollet's man,' and about the extent to which the Mollet aura pervaded the reconstituted executive. By his own choice Mollet occupied no formal position in the national offices of the PS, but there is little doubt that he continued to function as an 'éminence grise.' Furthermore, the fact that most of the CIR and Radicals had boycotted the constituent congress and had decided against adherence to the PS, made it easier for that party to conform to Mollet's preferred image of it as a socialist rather than a social-democratic organization.

Actually the policy preferences of the PS could be described as either socialist or social-democratic, depending upon one's taste for semantic distinctions. In its action program adopted in July 1969, the PS did not go far beyond a recapitulation of its rejection of capitalism. It repeated the traditional Socialist demands for a more redistributive economic policy, the improvement of the condition of the worker, the construction of public housing, the expansion of worker participation in factory management, and an increase in the power of parliament. In sum, these were not so much new policies as reaffirmations of the platform embraced earlier by the now defunct FGDS.

There was good reason for the ideological open-endedness of the PS, for despite its (officially claimed) membership of 88,000 -- to some extent the consequence of the adhesion of additional leftist clubs -- the PS could not be effective in future elections without allies. But which allies? A Left-Center alliance of course presupposed a collaboration of the working class and the petite bourgeoisie. Such collaboration was now theoretically possible in view of the claim of the PS that it included, "without making distinctions among beliefs or religious philosophies, all intellectuals and workers, all city or rural people who accept the ideals of socialism."<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately for the PS, a Left-Center alliance was not feasible because part of the Democratic Center (led by Jacques Duhamel) was being co-opted into the government majority of President Pompidou while the part that remained in opposition (led by Jean Lecanuet, a former leader of the MRP) was too weak and troubled by indecision. There were, however, a number of Socialists who considered an alliance with the Radicals. In view of the dynamic leadership of the Radical party under Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber and in view of its program, "Ciel et Terre", some Socialists in fact wondered whether the Radicals of 1970 were more revolutionary than the Socialists of 1946, and whether the Radicals, "no longer having a choice between risk and death," would wish to seek an alliance with the PS.<sup>33</sup>

As a practical step in building a system of alliances with progressive non-Socialists, André Chandernagor, an anti-Communist deputy, established

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<sup>32</sup>LeMonde, 11 June 1970, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup>LeMonde, 13 February 1970, p. 1.

Démocratie socialiste, which was not another party but rather an umbrella group made up of interested Socialists, Radicals, and Democratic Centrists. At the same time, the PS accepted Mitterrand's suggestion of continued discussions with the Communists. Although the PCF favored close cooperation and even hoped for a common platform, the PS was more cautious at this stage; it was interested mainly in a 'dialogue' and 'common activities in certain areas.'<sup>34</sup> Mitterrand, however, was concerned primarily with tactics. In an interview he declared that while theoretical discussions were necessary, the masses were not much interested in them.<sup>35</sup>

The need for an electoral alliance with the Communists was based on an optimistic assessment of the strength of the PS. Party leaders calculated that the growth in membership and the expanded appeal of the PS would be enough to insure that it would not be absorbed by the Communists. Furthermore, they reasoned, since the Communists had been able to capture no more than 23 percent of the popular vote since the end of World War II, they should welcome cooperation with another party. And the fact that only the Socialists were capable of helping the Communists out of their political ghetto would almost insure that the PS would ultimately emerge as the most important component of a united Left. This thesis, which had been steadfastly advocated by Mitterrand, dominated the discussions at the PS congress that met in June, 1971, at Epinay-sur-Seine. Its acceptance by the congress coincided with Mitterrand's transfer of the entire CIR, an organization which had once been noted for its anticommunism, into the reconstituted Socialist party.

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<sup>34</sup>LeMonde, 13 January 1970, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup>LeMonde, 27 February 1970, p. 1.

Mitterrand was elected to replace Alain Savary as the first secretary of the party. The choice of Mitterrand was fortunate. He was viewed as a person who combined a desire for a Popular Front with convincing credentials as a moderate who knew how to adapt himself to changing circumstances. It is of course true that in his political mobility Mitterrand was a proven vote-getter; it will be recalled that in the presidential elections of 1965 he had received 45.5 percent of the vote against General de Gaulle.

Mitterrand's assumption of the leadership did not mean that only one tendency would henceforth be articulated. In fact the PS was divided into the following broad groups: (1) the old supporters of Mollet, who fluctuated uneasily between hardline socialism and anti-Communism and who were interested in preserving a role for the old-time leaders of the SFIO; (2) the social-democratic and vociferously anti-Communist faction organized around Gaston Defferre and Pierre Mauroy; (3) the supporters of Savary's leftist clubs, which were formerly united in the UCRG; (4) the group organized around Jean Poperen, who had for many years devoted his energies to uniting the Left, and for that purpose had established the UGCS which professed to be more leftist than the UCRG; and (5) the supporters of Mitterrand, who were concerned more with a successful electoral strategy than with dogma.<sup>36</sup>

Another faction within the PS was the Centre d'études, de recherches et d'éducation socialistes (CERES). Established in June 1967, it described itself as "reformist révolutionnaire" and favored from the very beginning

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<sup>36</sup>Wright and Machin, "The French Socialist Party: Success and the Problems of Success," Political Quarterly 46 (January 1975): 45.

a reform of economic structures, the reconstitution of the Socialist party primarily on the basis of a reliance on the working class, and the establishment of a union of all left-wing movements (including the PCF) supported by a common platform.

This diversity was reflected in the PS Comité directeur: its expanded membership of 81 included 23 Defferrists, 13 supporters of Mitterrand, ten who were identified with Poperen, seven adherents of CERES, a few who were still nostalgic about Mollet's longtime leadership, and a miscellany of individuals who had their own unique approaches to Marxism. The Comité directeur continued to have a bureau, which had been expanded to 27 members and 14 national secretaries to assist the first secretary. The national convention, which was to meet every two years and to appoint the executive officers, was selected, as before, by the department federations, with the largest federations (Nord and Bouches-du-Rhône) furnishing the largest number of delegates.<sup>37</sup>

This complex democratic structure put the PS at a disadvantage vis-a-vis the PCF, which retained its highly centralized and disciplined organization. In order to overcome this disadvantage and maintain internal unity, the PS national secretaries had to participate constantly in the deliberations of the subnational party organizations. The first secretary had to attempt to arrest the tendencies of factions to recruit their own members on local levels. CERES was particularly noted for its independent activities. In the early 1970s CERES managed to found its own regional federations and to implant itself in factories. Its successful recruitment

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<sup>37</sup>George A. Coddington, Jr. and William Safran, Ideology and Politics: The Socialist Party of France (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1979): p. 219.

of CFDT unionists, ex-PSU elements, 'laic progressives', and even 'revolutionary Christians',<sup>38</sup> enabled it to more than double its representation in the Comité directeur by 1973 and to exert considerable influence on the other executive organs of the party.

Although its independent local activities were not unusual, CERES was considered troublesome. In the eyes of many, the 'leftism' of CERES and its belief in the class struggle were not fully credible since a significant proportion of its leaders were middle-class technocrats and intellectuals. While the CERES faction controlled the Paris federation of the PS, Defferre controlled the Marseilles (Bouches-du-Rhône) section even more tightly. In fact Defferre, with his local patronage and his grassroots committees (comités d'intérêts) in the municipal districts of Marseilles, frequently acted like a Tammany Hall boss.<sup>39</sup> But although Defferre supported Mitterrand's leadership, CERES continued to fight against it.

At the PS National Congress in Grenoble (June 1973), there were intensive discussions about changing the method of electing the Comité directeur so that CERES' influence could be reduced. Under the existing method, each faction had been automatically represented (by at least one person) in the party's executive organs if it had a minimum of five percent of the delegates at a party congress. Savary proposed that the Congress itself determine the composition of the Comité directeur, but to no avail. At the subsequent congress in Pau (January 1975), Mitterrand,

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<sup>38</sup>Jean-François Bizot, Léon Mercader, et Patrice van Eersel, Au part des socialistes: plongée libre dans les courants d'un grand parti (Paris: Grasset, 1975): p. 338.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 180-184.



whose support had increased dramatically, responded to the challenge of CERES. Mitterrand juxtaposed his own aims to CERES' notions concerning a 'revivified Marxism' as follows:

I want to build the organization of the party so that it will end up opening itself to the working class; so that it will be financially sound; so that it will be able at the proper time to respond to ill-advised government measures. At the same time one must continue to build a clear theory, an original vision of socialism.<sup>40</sup>

Mitterrand was interested above all in developing the PS into an effective electoral machine, and therefore he viewed as counterproductive CERES' insistence on remaining a distinct faction within the party. He succeeded in getting anti-CERES programmatic resolutions passed by 68 percent of the delegates.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, by expanding the Comité directeur to 130 members, the CERES component was reduced to an insignificant minority; it responded by quitting the secretariat for the next two years.

The ideological diversity of the PS and its inherent factionalism is a reflection of the changed composition of party membership. The new Socialist party, in eight years of existence, has been transformed from an ailing regional party to the most powerful party in France today. Further, it is the only party that can truthfully claim to be 'interclassiste'. Consider the data.

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<sup>40</sup>Quoted in Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>41</sup>François Mitterrand, Parti socialiste (Paris: Marabuto, 1977): p. 37.



Age Groups In The Socialist Party and in the General Population<sup>42</sup>

|             | PS   | Adult Pop.<br>(1) | Age of<br>Active Mem. | Active<br>Pop. (2) |
|-------------|------|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 16-25       | 5.7% | 19.7%             | 6.4%                  | 18.6%              |
| 25-30       | 9.8  | 7.7               | 10.9                  | 12.6               |
| 30-40       | 21.4 | 17.3              | 23.8                  | 21.1               |
| 40-50       | 22.9 | 17.2              | 25.5                  | 23.0               |
| 50-60       | 16.1 | 12.8              | 17.9                  | 15.5               |
| 60-65       | 12.6 | 7.2               | 14.0                  | 6.1                |
| 65 and over | 11.3 | 18.0              | --                    | 3.1                |

Sociology of Socialist Party Followers<sup>43</sup>

Active: 76.8%

Active non-salaried: 19.3

|                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Farmers .....             | 8.7 |
| Employers .....           | 1.0 |
| Artisans, Tradesmen ..... | 7.7 |
| Professionals .....       | 1.8 |

Active salaried: 57.5

|                                  |      |
|----------------------------------|------|
| Upper-level managers .....       | 12.4 |
| Middle-level managers .....      | 13.2 |
| Employees .....                  | 13.3 |
| Workers .....                    | 14.4 |
| Other workers and employees .... | 2.6  |
| Various officials .....          | 1.1  |
| Police, customs, army, other ... | 0.5  |

Inactive: 23.2

|                          |      |
|--------------------------|------|
| Retired .....            | 16.8 |
| Students .....           | 2.4  |
| Without profession ..... | 3.8  |
| Other .....              | 0.2  |

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<sup>42</sup>Patrick Hardouin, "Sociologie du parti socialiste," Revue Francaise de Science Politique 28 (avril 1978): 299.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 232.

Non-salaried in PS and in the Population<sup>44</sup>

|                           | % Total<br><u>PS</u> | Active<br>% Population |
|---------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Active salaried .....     | 57.5                 | 78.6 (1)               |
| Active non-salaried ..... | 19.3                 | 20.4                   |
| Farmers .....             | 8.7                  | 9.2                    |
| Employers .....           | 1.0                  | 1.3                    |
| Artisans, Tradesmen ..... | 7.7                  | 8.6                    |
| Professionals .....       | 1.8                  | 0.7                    |

(1) Including unemployed 1.8%

Educators<sup>45</sup>

|                                     | % Total<br><u>PS</u> | Active<br>% Population |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Total .....                         | 12.8                 | 3.0                    |
| Professors .....                    | 6.1                  | 1.2                    |
| Teachers .....                      | 5.3                  | 1.8                    |
| Directors and Ass't Directors ..... | 1.3                  | --                     |

Upper-level Management<sup>46</sup>

|   | % Total<br><u>PS</u> | % Active<br>Population |
|---|----------------------|------------------------|
| Engineers .....                             | 1.8                  | 1.2                    |
| Administrative upper-level management ..... | 2.4                  | 2.8                    |
| Other upper-level management .....          | 1.1                  | 0.3                    |

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 234.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 237.

Middle-level Management<sup>47</sup>

|  | % Total<br><u>PS</u> | % Active<br>Population |
|--|----------------------|------------------------|
| Total .....                                  | 7.6                  | 9.9                    |
| Technicians .....                            | 3.5                  | 4.5                    |
| Administrative middle-level management ..... | 3.1                  | 4.6                    |
| Other middle-level management .....          | 1.3                  | 2.3                    |

Workers and Employees<sup>48</sup>

|                             | % Total<br><u>PS</u> | % Active<br>Population |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Workers and employees ..... | 30.4                 | 53.3                   |
| Employees .....             | 13.3                 | 15.9                   |
| Workers .....               | 12.5                 | 35.0                   |

Government Workers<sup>49</sup>

|                                | % Total<br><u>PS</u> | % Active<br>Population |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Total Government Workers ..... | 22.8                 | 19.1                   |
| ENA .....                      | 12.8                 | 2.5                    |
| Other .....                    | 10.0                 | 16.6                   |

Evolution of the Socialist Electorate in France<sup>50</sup>

For each department, in percentage of votes, the progression or regression of socialist tallies between the legislative election of 1966 (before May 68 and the creation of the new PS) and the last legislative election

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 238.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 239.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>50</sup>Albert duRoy, "Qui est Socialiste en France," L'Express, 14 avril 1979, p. 78.



ADMINISTRATION -- LE MAL FRANCAIS

"Future revolutions will doubtless be directed against the administration and not against the political system."<sup>1</sup> There is little doubt that the institution in France that today bears the brunt of attacks coming from the entire range of the political, economic, and social spectrum, (said another way, universal sources of protest), is the French administration -- the state bureaucracy that, since the early part of the nineteenth century, has been charged with directing most of the state's affairs. Today, there is growing agreement that the excessive and nefarious role that the bureaucracy plays in French life must be curbed.<sup>2</sup>

The scorn, criticism and vilification usually heaped on the politicians and the political parties have been turned towards the bureaucracy, which is accused of overcentralization, of technocratic power and arrogance, of bureaucratic high-handedness and inefficiency, of inefficient management of the state's affairs, and of constituting a closed and a ruling class -- all these accusations being common to groups that have little else in common. No longer is it possible to maintain, as does Albert Lanza, that the demand for administrative reform is a theme of the

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Debbasch, L'Administration au pouvoir: fonctionnaires et politiques dans la V<sup>e</sup> Republique (Paris: Colin, 1969): p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Ezra N. Suleiman, "The French Bureaucracy and its Students: Toward the Desanctification of the State," World Politics 23 (October 1970): 122.

political opposition.<sup>3</sup> It is, today, a theme that both the government and the opposition attempt to exploit.

Even ministers of the Fifth Republic have not hesitated to criticize the administration. Albin Chalandon, the Minister of Equipment and Housing in 1970, made numerous attacks on the administration as a whole and on the administration of his own ministry in particular. "France is stifled," he said, "by the excessive hold of the state."<sup>4</sup> The severe criticism directed at the administration by Couve de Murville at the time he was Prime Minister is yet another example. In a speech before the Alumni Association of the Ecole Nationale d'Administration, he delivered a scathing attack on the insensitivity of the French administration and on its basically undemocratic character.<sup>5</sup> Gone perhaps are the days when the leading politicians of the country told the students of this school that they were, as General de Gaulle called them, "an elite in every respect, an intellectual elite, a moral elite,"<sup>6</sup> or that their ~~school~~<sup>school</sup> was "a wheel in a mechanism, the mechanism of French Democracy."<sup>7</sup> Far be it from any Prime Minister or President of the Republic to praise the administration today. Only a few months after he entered the Elysée, Georges Pompidou denounced before a solemn session of the Cour des Comptes what he called the "administrative labyrinths."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Albert Lanza, Les projets de réforme administrative en France de 1919 à nos jours (Paris: Colin, 1968): p. 160.

<sup>4</sup>Le Monde, 10 January 1970, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup>Le Monde, 9-10 February 1969, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup>Ezra N. Suleiman, "The French Bureaucracy and its Students: Toward the Desanctification of the State," World Politics 23 (October 1970): 122.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>8</sup>Le Monde, 26 September 1969, p. 1.

Four arguments have been advanced by Vincent Wright to support the claim that the Fifth Republic is an 'administrative state';<sup>9</sup>

- (1) The power of the Executive has been increased and government has been more stable, more efficient, more coherent. As a corollary, the power of Parliament, the political parties and the pressure groups has diminished. In these circumstances the civil service has greater liberty of maneuver, being free from traditional controls.
- (2) The regime has shown a constant interest in reform of the administration, and has carried out a large number of reforms.
- (3) The civil service has permeated all levels of decision-making, private and public.
- (4) There has been an increasing 'politicization' of the civil service which is increasingly identified with the Gaullists.

Each point may be examined in turn:

(1) Increase in the Power of the Executive

One of the constantly reiterated intentions of the founders of the Fifth Republic was to 'restore the authority of the State', an authority which had ~~apparently~~<sup>apparently</sup> been dangerously undermined during the previous regime. For de Gaulle and his supporters, the 'games, delights and poisons' of the system, so beloved by the intriguing and petty-minded politicians of the despised Fourth Republic, had discredited the State in the eyes of its own citizenry and had belittled the reputation of France in the eyes of the rest of the world. The true interests of France had been surrendered

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<sup>9</sup>Vincent Wright, "Politics and Administration Under the French Fifth Republic," Political Studies 22 (March 1974): 44.

to the pursuit of the divisive aims of the parties, entrenched in an all too powerful Parliament.

Le régime des partis and le régime d'Assemblée were among the fashionable, simplistic, misleading -- and more pleasant -- labels attached to the Fourth Republic. For the Gaullists, it was but 'a regime of weakness, incoherence, division, confusion and chaos' (Dubre).<sup>10</sup> Under the Fifth Republic, a number of measures were taken to put an end to the 'crisis of authority' which had afflicted previous regimes: for example, the army was slowly and painfully brought back under the control of Paris, and the police were reorganized. More important, however, were the steps taken to strengthen the executive branch of government: the means employed were constitutional, extraconstitutional, or, when the need arose, flagrantly unconstitutional. The powers of the President of the Republic and of the Government were increased, although the relationship between the two was left constitutionally ambivalent, and the power (and powers) of Parliament was drastically reduced. Among the more important constitutional innovations were Article 34, which severely restricts parliamentary intervention in legislating, and Article 38, which enables the government to ask Parliament by ordonnance, for a limited period, in areas which normally fall within the realm of law-making. Other important measures were outlined in the Constitution: governmental controls over the budget were tightened, the financial powers of the Parliament curtailed, the parliamentary commissions weakened, parliamentary sessions were shortened, the Government was given greater control of the parliamentary timetable,

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<sup>10</sup>Quoted in Ibid., p. 45.



the right of Deputies to propose amendments was made subject to governmental approval, the Government was accorded the right to ask for a 'blocked vote' on the whole or part of a bill and could insist that Parliament debate the Government's bill. In short, by a whole series of means, parliamentary control over the Executive was seriously curtailed. The Government has used, and frequently abused, all of its new constitutional rights, and the President has invented new ones by his own interpretations of the Constitution. The combination of a relatively tight constitutional corset, the existence of a disciplined parliamentary majority, an Executive insensitive to parliamentary feelings, and a largely compliant Constitutional Council have led to a situation of undoubted Executive primacy.

The framers of the new Constitution also sought deliberately to put an end to the confusion des pouvoirs which characterized the previous regime, by separating the Executive from the legislative branch of government. This confusion des pouvoirs, they believed, served only to jeopardize the unity, cohesion and discipline of France. As delegates of their parties, members of the Government would be reflecting the divisions of the nation. Any constitutional arrangement which left the political parties in powerful positions could only detract from the effective pursuit of successful and coherent domestic and foreign policies.

As the French Executive is now much less restricted than during the Fourth Republic, the civil service has gained scope for action, for it is less dependent on the prevailing political situation. The growth of effective presidential government and greater ministerial stability also ensures more coherence in policies; civil servants now know that they can plan much

further ahead. It is also contended that much less interference in Government legislation has probably benefited the civil servants more than their political masters. As Williams and Harrison note, "Civil servants are now unworried by parliamentary questions, intrusive private members bills or awkward debates in an Assembly which meets less than half a year. Measures they draft which would have once been ignored, mangled or rejected by the Assembly have now a better chance of passing Parliament unscathed or of bypassing it altogether by decree".<sup>11</sup> Legislation concerning such varied matters as social security, currency reform, Paris and the Paris Region, and the stabilization plan (1961) have all been initiated and drafted within the administration without ministerial interference. Professor Ridley adds: ". . . the technocrats have played a leading role in a host of decisions which were not at the time the subject of strong political controversy or where sectional interests were not sufficiently mobilized. In the long run, these decisions may well prove to have been of greater importance than the major 'political' decisions in shaping French society (economic planning, industrial planning, industrial expansion, regional development, reforms in the educational system, promotion of scientific research, etc.)."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>P.M. Williams and W. Harrison, Politics and Society in de Gaulle's Republic (London: Longman Co., 1971): p. 243.

<sup>12</sup>F.F. Ridley, "French Technocracy and Comparative Government," Political Studies 14 (February 1966): 39.

(2) The Preoccupation of the Regime with Administrative Reform

At the beginning of the Fifth Republic, Michel Debré continually emphasized that reform of the administration was the necessary complement to political and constitutional reform. Fundamental to his thought was the need to render decision-making less 'political', a dirty word in the vocabulary of the early Gaullists. In his first speech as Prime Minister, to Parliament, he insisted on the need to 'depoliticise<sup>Z</sup> the vital problems' and asserted that 'the depoliticization of the essential policies of the nation is a major imperative.'<sup>13</sup>

The regime appeared intent on administrative reform, and provided itself with 'the instruments of change'. The Ministry of Administrative Reform, established in 1963, was supported by older bodies such as the Comité central d'enquête sur le coût et le rendement des services publics and the Mission permanente de la réforme administrative. New bodies were created in the economic, regional and communal spheres, all bearing witness to the regime's desire for greater administrative coordination: The DATAR, the various missions (Languedoc-Roussillon is the best known example), the communautés urbaines, the districts.

Among the reforms carried out during the Fifth Republic are the creation of new ministries (Equipment and Social Affairs in 1967), the reorganization of the major ministries (Finance, Education, Defense, Labor, Health) and their local field services, the appointment of General Secre-

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<sup>13</sup>Vincent Wright, "Politics and Administration Under the French Fifth Republic," Political Studies 22 (March 1974): 47.

taries in certain Ministries (Education and Foreign Affairs, for example) a minor reform of the Conseil d'Etat (less drastic than many Gaullists hoped and many members of the Conseil feared), the 'harmonization' of administrative areas, the sweeping reforms of the Paris area, the regional reforms of 1960, 1964, and 1972, the controversial reforms of the prefectoral administration, the changes in the powers, financing and methods of electing local councils, and the repeated attempts to induce communal regrouping.

(3) The Civil Service Has Permeated All Levels of Decision-Making, Private and Public.

The intervention of the State in the life of the nation has taken on excessive proportions: the growth of the 'concerted economy', of 'indicative planning', the increasing hold of the State over economic investment, the growing influence of bodies such as the Commissariat au Plan, the Caisse des dépôts et consignations, the DATAR, the nationalized industries and more recently the sociétés d'économie mixte, all have involved the growing influence of civil servants in the economic life of the nation. At the national level, there are now some 500 Conseils, 1,200 comités and 3,000 commissions, the instruments of administrative pluralism, which bring together civil servants and representatives of the economic and social interest groups. In spite of attempts by successive Governments to rationalize these bodies, they are actually becoming more numerous.

'Pantouflage', a process by which top-ranking civil servants transfer into important and lucrative posts in the private sector, ensures that even private industry is marked by 'la présence des fonctionnaires'. The

mobility of members of the 'grandes écoles' (particularly the Ecole Polytechnique and the Ecole Nationale d'Administration) is matched only by the seeming omnipresence of members of the Conseil d'Etat or the ubiquity of the Inspecteurs des finances.

Nowhere are the invading tendencies of the civil servants more evidence than in their 'colonization' of numerous key posts which lie on the borderline of politics and administration: the General Secretariat of the Elysée, the cabinet of the Prime Minister and more generally the ministerial cabinets.

Ministerial cabinets were composed, generally, of the personal friends and political allies of the Minister, recruited to support him in the event of a conflict with the administration. During the Fourth Republic, there was a growing tendency to choose civil servants, although party pressures might, on occasions, put a brake on this tendency. Under the Fifth Republic, the tendency has accelerated: civil servants now compose 90 percent of the membership of the cabinets.

(4) The Increasing 'Politicization' of the Civil Service.

The presence of civil servants in the political institutions of the country is certainly more marked under the Fifth Republic than under previous regimes. Their colonization of the ministerial cabinets is only one factor which worries the critics. The civil servant's presence in a cabinet does not necessarily mean that he is already 'politicized', but it does mean that he is in danger of becoming so.

The increasing 'politicization' of the administration may be more clearly seen in the number of civil servants who were candidates at general elections and who were elected.<sup>14</sup>

Civil servants or ex-civil servants standing in general elections (excluding members of the armed forces and the teaching profession)

|              | 1956 | 1958 | 1962 | 1967 |
|--------------|------|------|------|------|
| Judges       | 6    | 5    | 1    | 6    |
| Grands corps | 48   | 68   | 94   | 109  |
| Others       | 109  | 114  | 68   | 72   |
| Cabinets     | 5    | 6    | 8    | 11   |

Civil servants or ex-civil servants elected Deputies (excluding members of the armed forces and the teaching profession)

|              | 1956 | 1958 | 1962 | 1967 |
|--------------|------|------|------|------|
| Judges       | 3    | -    | 2    | 2    |
| Grands corps | 16   | 31   | 40   | 53   |
| Others       | 16   | 12   | 11   | 8    |
| Cabinets     | -    | -    | 3    | -    |

It should be noted also that the tables refer to the profession being exercised at the time of election and do not include those people who had been, at some stage in their careers, in the civil service.

At the level of local politics, too, the influence of civil servants (especially of Paris based civil servants) is quite astonishing. Among the 38,000 mayors of France there are many representatives of all the grands corps and personnel of all the Ministries.

What has struck critical opinion most, however, is the increasing identification of the civil service with the Gaullists. The list of the

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<sup>14</sup> Charles Debbasch, L'Administration au pouvoir: fonctionnaires et politiques dans la V<sup>e</sup> République (Paris: Colin, 1969): p. 58.

Prime Ministers of the Fifth Republic is significant in this respect: Debré and Pompidou had both been members of the Conseil d'Etat, Chaban-Delmas and Couve de Murville started their careers in the Inspection des finances, while Messmer had been a colonial administrator. Equally revealing was de Gaulle's early choice of Ministers from outside Parliament and from the civil service. Just over half the Ministers of the Fifth Republic have been ex-civil servants; in Pompidou's first ministry, civil servants held the key portfolios of Algerian Affairs, Justice, Foreign Affairs, Defense, Education and Labor. It was sometimes difficult to know where the civil service started and where the government ended. The influence of ex-civil servants was still very marked in the Government formed by Messmer in 1972: of thirty Ministers and Secretaries of State, fifteen (and not the least) had spent part of their careers in a cabinet, and six of these were the products of ENA.

At the parliamentary level, the identification of the civil service with the Gaullists is also striking: in the 1962 elections, 22 of the 44 higher civil servants elected to Parliament belonged to the Gaullist party and only six to the parties of the Left. Of the fourteen other civil servants elected Deputies, seven were candidates of the UNR. In the 1967 elections, of the 53 civil servants elected, 29 belonged to the UDR, six were Independent Republicans, and three belonged to the PDM (a total of 38 Gaullists and sympathizers). Only thirteen belonged to the Federation of the Left and none was a Communist. A study of the elections of 1968 and 1973 reinforce the impression already gained.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Vincent Wright, "Politics and Administration Under the French Fifth Republic," Political Studies 22 (March 1974): 49.

In conclusion, through the increased power of the executive and the corresponding decreased power of the legislative branch, the permeation by the bureaucracy of offices of government heretofore political in character, the regime's preoccupation with administrative reform, and the increasingly blatant politicization of the bureaucracy, the Fifth Republic has become more efficient. In the process, however, it has removed accountability for its actions, angering many people. This unwillingness to accept an administrative state is a major factor in the regime's inability to achieve constitutional consensus. The next chapter will deal with the most important way this unwillingness has been recently manifested.



RESPONSE OF PROTEST -- THE COMMON PROGRAM

Despite their obvious differences with the PCF, virtually all Socialists were unhappy with the existing forms of capitalism and were committed to altering the system of economic relations by standard democratic methods. However, several approaches to socialism were in contention. A small faction (concentrated primarily within groups belonging to the CGT and to CERES) favored a Soviet-style wholesale abolition of the capitalist system through a comprehensive nationalization policy. Others (found especially within the leadership of the CFDT and among individuals formerly associated with the PSU) preferred the more gradualist approach of factory self-management (autogestion). Most Socialists were interested only in fighting what they considered to be the overconcentration of economic power and, beyond that, in promoting the transformation of capitalism from within (as the Swedes had been doing rather successfully) by a redistributive policy aimed at achieving as much equality as possible without a drastic and sudden abolition of the capitalist system.

The PS platform, Changer la vie,<sup>1</sup> presented by Mitterrand and adopted in 1972, was an attempt to combine all of these approaches. This document of over 240 pages was hardly revolutionary. Mitterrand's introduction contained the usual references to "ending the exploitation of man by man," the fight against monopoly capital, and the need to make French society

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<sup>1</sup>Parti socialiste, Changer la Vie: Programme de gouvernement du parti socialiste (Paris: Flammarion, 1972).

more egalitarian, both in terms of income and opportunity. The program was remarkable for its detailed attention to minimum wages, sliding scales, the return to the 40-hour work week, the support of farmers' incomes, aid to shopkeepers and artisans, tax reforms, the abolition of the death penalty, the democratization of the process and content of planning, the establishment of local democracy, the nationalization of certain enterprises, as well as steps to be taken "in the direction of factory self-management." There was, in addition, a demand for the return to the electoral system based on proportional representation that had been in effect during the Fourth Republic. Finally, the PS program called for the replacement of the prefects by general council presidents as provincial chief executives.

Since the PCF accepted most of this program, it could form the basis of a joint platform with the PS. Furthermore, the Communists seemed to have come around to accepting at least implicitly the position of the PS, as contained in its program, that "the defense of liberties is compatible only with democratic institutions." The PCF had already given up its view of elections as "treason"; after the 'May Events,' the 'domestication' of the PCF had evolved even further with the appearance of numerous publications by Communist politicians and intellectuals expostulating new approaches. The culmination of this development was the appearance of the 1971 PCF program,<sup>2</sup> in which there were no references to the dictatorship of the proletariat; which favored the achievement of socialist goals by parliamentary means; and which seemed to accept free elections, free speech, and

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<sup>2</sup>Parti communiste français, Changer de cap: programme pour un gouvernement démocratique d'union populaire (Paris: Edition Sociales, 1972).

interparty competition. In this program, the PCF also publicly committed itself to the acceptance of the principle that, once in power, it would be willing to step aside peacefully if it lost an election. These developments produced a softening of popular antagonisms toward the Communists, and made a Socialist rapprochement with them less risky. And since by 1972 PS membership was already close to 100,000, the PS could finally deal with the PCF from a position of relative strength.

On June 27, 1972, the two parties signed a Common Program.<sup>3</sup> This document, which took several months to fashion, was on the surface a compromise between the Communist and Socialist party platforms. Most of its 150 pages read like a typical social democratic platform, calling for the extension of social benefits, the strengthening of trade-union rights, the gradual elimination of parochial schools, the abolition of the death penalty, the repeal of Article 16 of the constitution, and the return to proportional representation. The PCF's acceptance of civil liberties -- which was to be reaffirmed three years later at the party's twenty-second congress when it issued a "declaration on liberties" -- was matched by the Socialists' acceptance of autogestion of factory workers and the nationalization of industries. The PS benefited directly from the first of its compromises. Since autogestion had been a major concern of the PSU and the CFDT, its acceptance by the PS led these two groups to associate themselves with the PS and support Mitterrand in subsequent parliamentary and presidential elections. This development also led to the partial integration of the

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<sup>3</sup>Partis communiste et socialiste, Programme commun de gouvernement du parti communiste et du parti socialiste (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1972).

leadership of the CFDT into the decision-making structure of the PS and culminated two years later in the PSU leadership and a large proportion of its membership joining the PS.

In spite of the Common Program, the Socialists and Communists still disagreed on several major points. First of all, though the PS in principle favored the nationalization of the very largest, monopolistic enterprises, it could not go along with the Communists' more far-reaching designs. Secondly, both parties agreed on raising the minimum wages of the lowest paid industrial workers, but the PS preferred to narrow the differential between the highest and lowest wages somewhat less than the PCF. The Socialists' more moderate stand was to make it easier for the Left Radical movement (the Mouvement des radicaux<sup>x</sup> de gauche - MRG), which contained a significant petit-bourgeois element and which opposed nationalization, to join the leftist alliance.<sup>4</sup>

There were certain other issues on which the two parties were divided. For instance, the PS held a generally favorable view regarding the prospects of European integration, while the Communists resembled the Gaullists in harboring suspicions about the Common Market. On the Middle East dispute the PS, which included many supporters of Israel, tended to be neutral, while the Communists, again like the Gaullists, held one-sided pro-Arab views. As the parliamentary elections approached, such disagreements were deliberately underemphasized. In addition the PS and PCF agreed

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<sup>4</sup>The MRG's joining led to an updated program, Programme commun du gouvernement: Parti socialiste, parti communiste, et mouvement des radicaux de gauche (Paris: Flammarion, 1973).

on certain ad hoc elaborations of the Common Program: specific housing units to be built per annum, specific minimum wages, and a lowered retirement age for men and women.

The Left made impressive gains in the parliamentary elections that took place on March 4 and 11, 1973. The Socialists in particular had succeeded in appealing to centrist voters who were frustrated with Pompidou's policy immobilism and insufficiently convinced of the reformist zeal of the Reformateur movement, a new alliance of the Democratic Center and Radical parties. The PS even made inroads in a number of traditionally Gaullist areas, e.g., Lorraine and Western France, where it received eight percent more votes than in the previous parliamentary elections. Conversely the PS lost votes in Southern France, where electors were fearful of the consequences of Socialist collaboration with the Communists. In any case the PS together with its Left-Radical ally received 20.4 percent of the popular vote (as compared to the Communist share of 21.3 percent) on the first ballot, and 25.1 percent of the second ballot votes (compared to 21.3 percent for the PCF).<sup>5</sup> The Socialists sent 94 deputies to parliament, and the Left-Radical ally, nine (compared to 73 Communists), thus nearly doubling their representation. It is clear that the PS benefited from the agreement among the Common Program parties that the leftist candidate who had the weaker first-ballot performance would withdraw in favor of the stronger on the second ballot. (See table, below)

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<sup>5</sup>LeMonde, 6 March 1973, p. 1.

LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS MARCH 4, 1973, FIRST BALLOT<sup>6</sup>

|   | #         | %    |
|---|-----------|------|
| Communist and related .....                                   | 5,026,417 | 21.2 |
| Extreme Left (PSU) .....                                      | 776,717   | 3.3  |
| UGSD .....  | 4,523,399 | 19.2 |
| Other Left .....  | 649,855   | 2.7  |
| Union des Républicains de<br>Progres et Divers Majorité ..... | 9,003,452 | 38.1 |
| Reformers .....   | 2,965,947 | 12.6 |
| Various Right .....   | 660,186   | 2.8  |

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTED

|                                   |     |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Communist .....                   | 73  |
| Socialist and MRG .....           | 103 |
| Social Democratic Reformers ..... | 34  |
| Centrist Union .....              | 30  |
| UDR .....                         | 183 |
| RI .....                          | 55  |
| Non-aligned .....                 | 12  |

The leadership of Mitterrand had proved decisive. He was duly rewarded for his performance when he was overwhelmingly re-elected as first secretary of the party at the PS congress in Grenoble (June 1973). Mitterrand's leadership and the unity of the Left alliance continued to hold when, as a consequence of Pompidou's death on April 2, 1974, France was plunged into a presidential campaign. Unlike the situation in previous presidential elections, there was no competition for the party's standard bearer: Mitterrand was selected almost unanimously as the candidate of his own party and endorsed without difficulty by the MRG and the PCF.

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<sup>6</sup>François Goguel, Alfred Grosser, La politique en France (Paris: Colin, 1975): p. 260.

Mitterrand went into the election campaign with several advantages. The petroleum crisis that followed in the wake of the October 1973 Mideast War had caused severe economic problems for France. The restlessness of workers over the loss of real income had given rise to wildcat strikes, and Pompidou, already ill, had appeared to be irresolute and confused about what policies to pursue. In addition the opponents of the Left were divided, with the Gaullists and the centrists each putting up their own candidates, Chaban-Delmas and Giscard d'Estaing, respectively.

To face his opponent without difficulty on the second ballot, Mitterrand had to make a good showing on the first ballot. In order to draw first-ballot votes away from Giscard in particular, whom the Democratic Centrists and Radicals were inclined to support, Mitterrand avoided saying too much about the prospects of nationalization or the future of the French commitment to the Western alliance in the event of his victory. Instead he emphasized the Left's concern for the workers and the poor. Mitterrand reiterated the Left's well-known position on institutions: a reinvigoration of parliament and a corresponding reduction of presidential prerogatives. At the same time, to reassure uncommitted and suspicious voters, he promised that he (rather than the premier) would select the cabinet -- thus endorsing the Gaullist view of presidential powers -- and that, if elected, he would not give certain delicate portfolios to Communists.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Howard R. Penniman, ed., France at the Polls: The Presidential Election of 1974 (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1975): p. 53.



On the first ballot Mitterrand received the largest number of votes in what was essentially a three-cornered race: he obtained 43.4 percent against Giscard's 32.8 percent and Chaban's 14.8 percent (with the rest of the vote divided among nine other candidates). This result was not quite good enough for the Left, which had hoped to get at least 45 percent. Mitterrand (and to a lesser extent Communist leader Marchais), in an attempt to draw a few crucial left-wing Gaullist voters to the leftist alliance and weaken Giscard's second-ballot chances, emphasized Giscard's conservative and business-oriented political background, and even briefly endorsed the Gaullists' exaggerated nationalism.<sup>8</sup> But this tactic proved fruitless; the Gaullists overwhelmingly flocked to Giscard's support, with the result that Mitterrand (with 49.3 percent of the popular vote against Giscard's 50.7 percent) once again failed to bring the Left to power.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, MAY 5 and 19, 1974<sup>9</sup>

| First Round                    | # Votes    | %    |
|--------------------------------|------------|------|
| François Mitterrand .....      | 10,863,402 | 43.3 |
| Valéry Giscard d'Estaing ..... | 8,253,856  | 32.9 |
| Jacques Chaban-Delmas .....    | 3,646,209  | 14.6 |
| Jean Royer .....               | 808,885    | 3.2  |
| Arlette Laguiller .....        | 591,339    | 2.3  |
| Second Round                   |            |      |
| Valéry Giscard d'Estaing ..... | 13,082,006 | 50.6 |
| François Mitterrand .....      | 12,737,607 | 49.3 |

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<sup>8</sup> Le Monde, 15, 16, 17 May 1974, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> François Goguel, Alfred Grosser, La politique en France (Paris: Colin, 1975): pp. 260-261.



The presidency of Giscard, apart from constituting a severe blow to the hopes of the Left, proved to be embarrassing for another reason: the preemption of much of the Socialists' program. There was a considerable revival of the power of parliament as that body was increasingly consulted on social and economic legislation. In the spring of 1974, the PS introduced some forty bills calling for the lowering of the voting age to 18, the raising of the minimum wage, the granting of equal pay for men and women, the liberalization of abortion laws, and the exemption of the aged from medical-care payments. Such reforms, and others, were enacted during the following three years not as Socialist legislation but largely as a result of the government's own bills, for which the Giscardian deputies took most of the credit.<sup>10</sup> As a result of Giscard's politics of reformism, a number of progressive Centrists and Radicals who might have been drawn to the Socialists were instead being attracted to Giscardism. Although certain Radicals (such as Servan-Schreiber) would have preferred an understanding with the Socialists, such an option was for the time being foreclosed by the continuation of the Common Program alliance.

Nevertheless, the Parti socialiste continued to strengthen itself. By 1975 the party membership, swelled by the influx of former PSU members, former Democratic Centrists and even renegade Communists, had reached 140,000, and by mid-1977, 164,000.<sup>11</sup> The federations of Bouches-du-Rhône, Nord, and Pas-de-Calais accounted for about one-fourth of the total member-

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<sup>10</sup>For examples of legislative activity in the spring of 1977, see Journal officiel, May 27 (pollution control); June 29 (increase in pensions); and July 6 (employment of young people).

<sup>11</sup>François Mitterrand, ed., Les socialistes (Paris: Flash-Actualité-Marabout, 1977): p. 42.

ship. A large proportion of FO and FEN members had over the years been Socialist supporters; in addition the CFDT leadership was solidly in the Socialist camp, and an increasing number of CGT members switched their loyalties from the PCF to the PS. Much of this achievement was the result of assiduous recruiting. By early 1977 the PS had established some 900 sections in factories.<sup>12</sup> The party publications were now addressing themselves to a diversity of social sectors; they included the journal L'Unité, which contained features on agriculture, the communes, women, and youth; Le Poing et la Rose, a monthly dealing with party matters; La Nouvelle Revue Socialiste, containing articles on ideology; Socialisme et Entreprise, intended for employers and industrial managers; and L'Université Socialiste, (published under the auspices of the Cercle Jean Jaures) for students.

Throughout 1977 most public-opinion polls predicted that the Left would dominate the Assembly by a two or three percent margin.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately the unity of the Left had already begun to erode. Disputes between the two major parties of the leftist alliance, primarily over the nature of the Common Program, had in fact occurred a short time after the presidential elections, but were not then considered serious. They gained steadily in volume and acerbity in the spring of 1977, however, and continued up to the parliamentary elections a year later.

As we have seen, the Common Program had included references to nationalization and wage equalization but had omitted both specific details and a timetable for their implementation. Now that a Left victory was

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<sup>12</sup>Howard Machin and Vincent Wright, "The French Left Under the Fifth Republic," Comparative Politics 10 (October 1977): 58.

<sup>13</sup>Robert Schneider, "Le Face à Face Barre-Mitterrand," L'Express, 9-15 mai 1977, p. 104.

within reach, the PCF insisted that these policies be clearly defined. The Common Program had named only nine firms as candidates for takeover; but now the Communists were insisting that more than a thousand firms be nationalized, including domestic and foreign subsidiaries. The Socialists were reluctantly prepared to nationalize about a hundred companies, including the main deposit banks, as well as about a dozen industrial giants (among them large steel and automobile firms). The Common Program had proposed differential forms of nationalization, not all of them amounting to complete takeovers by the government. Thus, full nationalization was envisaged for some giant firms with insufficient private capital (e.g., the Dassault aircraft manufacturing firm) or under foreign control (e.g., Honeywell-Bull), while for other sectors (e.g., certain steel firms), the government was to become merely the majority stockholder. The Communists, however, preferred outright nationalization.

The PSF and PS also disagreed on means of indemnification: the Communists wished to base the amount of indemnification on the value of shares during the three years prior to nationalization, while the Socialists wished the sum to be determined by the fair market price. Furthermore, the PCF favored the spreading of indemnification payments over a twenty-year period, while the PS preferred an exchange of shares with stockholders. Another point of contention was the management of the nationalized firms: the PS insisted that aptitude and expertise be the chief criteria in the selection of managers, while the PCF favored their selection by the trade unions (hoping thereby to increase the power of CGT, still the strongest union and still heavily controlled by Communists).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Georges Mamy and Franz-Olivier Giesbert, "Les quatorze dossiers du 15 septembre," Le Nouvel Observator, 29 août - 4 septembre, 1977, pp. 24-25.

The two parties also disagreed on the matter of redistribution. The PCF favored a reduction of the existing income gap of 1:10 between the lowest and the highest decile of wage earners to a 1:5 ratio, while the PS preferred a 1:8 ration. Both parties demanded a raise of minimum wages, but the Socialists' figures, which represented a compromise between the positions of the CFDT and the MRG, were somewhat lower than those of the Communists. Furthermore, the Communists insisted on a specific timetable for the implementation of the Left's platform that the Socialists were unable to accept.

A further difference of opinion revolved around the electoral system. All three parties of the Left favored a return to proportional representation, at least for Assembly and Senate elections, as well as for elections to the councils of larger municipalities. The PS and its ally, the MRG, however, wished to exempt the smaller communities from this reform for the simple reason that these parties were in a better position than the PCF to make alliances with centrist parties in such communities.<sup>15</sup>

An additional disagreement involved foreign policy. The Common Program had included a demand for the phasing out of the independent French nuclear force (force de frappe). While the PS held fast to that plank, the PCF now embraced the Gaullist position of favoring the maintenance of such a force -- not because the Communists had come to believe in its defense efficacy, but in order to demonstrate their continuing hostility to Atlanticism. Similarly, the PS was inclined to favor a system of direct

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<sup>15</sup>LeMonde, 11 August 1977, p. 1.

popular elections to the European Economic Community's parliament, while the Communists, essentially hostile to European integration, were unenthusiastic.

There were differences of opinion on other matters as well. The PCF demanded a number of cabinet seats in the event of a Leftist victory. While Mitterrand was not opposed to such demands, he still carefully refrained from specifying the portfolios to be assigned to the Communists. However, it was generally understood that the PCF would not be given such sensitive ministries as interior (which controls the police), justice, defense, or foreign affairs. In addition the PCF demanded the right to veto any policy that might be promoted by Mitterrand once he assumed the premiership, but Mitterrand refused to have his hands tied.

Mitterrand was pressured by the CERES wing of his party (and by certain elements of the CGT) to be more forthcoming in his concessions. (CERES did not agree with every Communist demand, but it was concerned with maintaining the unity of the Left at almost any cost.) At the same time, the moderates in his own party and his allies from the Left Radicals felt that he had already conceded too much.

Several meetings between the two parties were held to try to narrow the gap. The PCF's list of firms to be nationalized was reduced to 729, and the PS's list was expanded to 227. The PS also tried to defuse the conflict over the nuclear strike force by suggesting that a referendum be held on this matter after the elections.

All attempts at compromise failed, and at the end of September further discussion ceased. The PCF stepped up its campaign of vituperation against the Socialists, who were accused of playing a centrist game and of

neglecting the interests of the masses.<sup>16</sup> The PS responded in kind. In an article in LeMonde, a member of the party's bureau suggested that the Communists had no right to berate the PS, or to speak for the French, since the PCF represented only 20 percent of the total electorate, less than half of the pro-Left electorate, and not even the entire working class. Moreover, he argued, the PCF showed a disquieting conception of multipartism and an intolerance of diversities of opinion. Finally, he reminded the PCF that whereas it arrived at its positions without internal debates, the PS made its decisions on the basis of intensive discussions.<sup>17</sup>

The hardened position of the PCF vis-à-vis the PS had much less to do with programmatic considerations than with the realization that the PS had emerged as the senior partner in the Left alliance. Public opinion polls throughout 1977 had shown that the Socialist party was the choice of 30 to 33 percent of the electorate, as against 20 percent for the PCF. It is probably true that the PS's increased popularity derived from its tactical advantage: its ability to play the role of a mediator between the extreme Left and the progressively inclined centrists. This was illustrated by the fact that for at least a year the leadership of the Radical party and the Democratic Centrists (the Centre des démocrates sociaux) had suggested an alliance with the Socialists if only they would break with the Communists. The acceptability of the PS was also illustrated by the decision of the MRG not to compete with Socialists in over 200 constituencies in the forthcoming parliamentary elections.

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<sup>16</sup>L'Humanité, 28 September 1977, p.1

<sup>17</sup>LeMonde, 18 August 1977, p. 1.

There is some reason to believe that by provoking the rift with the Socialists, the PCF hoped to exploit whatever dissatisfaction existed with the leadership of Mitterrand. An IFOP poll<sup>18</sup> had shown that only 52 percent of Socialist voters were completely satisfied with Mitterrand's leadership, while 15 percent were sensitive to arguments that the Socialist leader had been insufficiently concerned with the plight of the working class.

While Mitterrand and the PS continued to be committed to socialist economic goals, they were equally committed to the continuation of parliamentary methods. They were not entirely convinced that the PCF had been fully converted to such methods, or that it had deStalinized itself completely.<sup>19</sup> On the contrary, the PCF had been heavily criticizing Helmut Schmidt and James Callaghan, the Socialist prime ministers of Germany and Britain with whom Mitterrand maintained good relations, but avoided criticism of the repressive regimes of Czechoslovakia and other Eastern European countries. The Socialists also feared that a programmatic convergence too close to the PCF might alienate many of the newly acquired members of their party.

The PCF for <sup>its</sup> ~~their~~ part was not only worried about the Socialists' commitment to implementing the Common Program, but also about whether the support of Mitterrand by the Communists would pay them sufficiently in terms of office. The fear that Mitterrand would cast them off as allies in favor of Democratic Centrists was based on the fact that Mitterrand

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<sup>18</sup>Le Figaro, 24 October 1977, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup>Le Monde, 5 October 1977, p. 1.



had unabashedly labelled himself a reformist Social Democrat who "would not hesitate to sacrifice the union of the Left" if freedom were threatened.<sup>20</sup>

There were additional grounds for the Communists' suspicions. A poll conducted in the autumn of 1977 had revealed that only 29 percent of Socialist voters hoped for a postelection coalition with the PCF. The other preferences were as follows: a Socialist-Left Radical coalition, 27 percent; a Socialist-Centrist alignment, 16 percent; and Socialist participation in a Gaullist-Giscardian-Centrist government, 24 percent.<sup>21</sup> Communist suspicion was also based on the social-democratic rhetoric emanating with increasing volubility from the Democratic Centrists and Giscardians and on the network of close personal relations between Socialist and Centrist politicians that had been built up since the days of the Fourth Republic. Such relationships had been particularly important on local levels, with the result that Socialist-Communist electoral agreements arrived at nationally had been translated with doubtful effectiveness locally. Nevertheless, in most of the smaller communities, the PS had little difficulty in reaffirming its agreement with the PCF concerning second-ballot withdrawals, in the foreknowledge that the Socialist candidate would almost invariably do better on the first ballot than the Communist one.

At a congress eight years earlier, the Socialist party had specifically rejected alliances with "forces representing capitalism," or the

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<sup>20</sup> Jean-François Bizot, Len Mercadet, and Patrick van Eersel, Au parti des Socialistes: plongée libre dans les courants d'un grand parti, (Paris: Grasset, 1975): p. 56.

<sup>21</sup> SOFRES poll cited in Le Nouvel Observateur, 16 January 1975, pp. 32-33.



quest for "centrist combinations".<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, in practice such alliances were never foreclosed at the local level. As Defferre put it, "there is no Common Program for municipalities."<sup>23</sup> On this matter Defferre reflected the attitude of the national leadership of the PS. In 1973 -- a year after the signing of the Common Program -- Communist leader Marchais had critically noted the continued tendency of Socialists to cooperate with centrists locally. Claude Estier, a member of the Comité directeur, had responded with the assertion that "the ambition of the Socialist party to develop its audience . . . is not incompatible with its will to the unity of the Left."<sup>24</sup> The misunderstandings between Socialists and Communists engendered by such an attitude sometimes had interesting consequences. At Reims, for instance, where the Left had gained control of the city council in March 1977, Socialist councilmen refused to vote for the budget submitted by the Communist mayor, charging that he had been using his office to favor his Communist comrades over Socialists in the distribution of local offices.

Nevertheless, during the parliamentary election campaign, Mitterrand remained publicly committed to his party's electoral (i.e., second-ballot withdrawal) agreement with the PCF. Marchais however refused to make such a commitment until after the first ballot.

The results of the first round of the parliamentary elections, which took place on March 12, 1978, were a severe disappointment for the entire Left. Together its three parties garnered only 45.3 percent of the

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<sup>22</sup>Jean Poperen, L'Unité de la gauche, 1965-73 (Paris: Fayard, 1975): p. 267

<sup>23</sup>LeMonde, 28 October 1975, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup>LeMonde, 29 May 1973, p. 1.

popular vote, as against 46.5 percent for the Gaullist and the Giscardian electoral alliance, the Union pour la Démocratie Française (UDF). The outcome of the second ballot a week later was even less encouraging: the Left received 49.3 percent of the vote against 50.7 percent for the majority parties. The result in terms of the allocation of parliamentary seats was worse still: 200 for the Left to 287 for the Majority.

FIRST BALLOT LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS MARCH 12.<sup>25</sup>

| Parties supporting Common Programme | Votes             | Percentage  |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Socialists .....                    | 6,451,151         | 22.6        |
| Communists .....                    | 5,870,402         | 20.6        |
| Left Radicals .....                 | 603,932           | 2.1         |
| TOTAL                               | <u>12,925,485</u> | <u>45.3</u> |

Majority Parties

|              |                   |             |
|--------------|-------------------|-------------|
| RPR .....    | 6,462,462         | 22.6        |
| UDF .....    | 6,128,849         | 21.5        |
| Others ..... | 684,985           | 2.4         |
| TOTAL        | <u>13,276,296</u> | <u>46.5</u> |

Composition

|                  |     |
|------------------|-----|
| RPR .....        | 143 |
| UDF .....        | 108 |
| Socialists ..... | 102 |
| Communists ..... | 86  |

It is not clear why the PS and its Left-Radical ally gained only nine seats compared to the PCF's twelve. It is possible that the PCF sabotaged the success of Socialist candidates in some constituencies by

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<sup>25</sup>"National Assembly Elections," Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 24 November 1978, p. 29322.

'sitting out' the second ballot; it is equally possible that centrist voters, whose support might have gone to the Socialists, punished them for having made an alliance with the Communists. Still, the PS emerged with 104 parliamentary seats, 18 more than the Communists, and could look forward with certainty to the support of the ten Left-Radical deputies. Moreover, the elections confirmed that, with 28 percent of the total second-ballot vote, the Socialist party had become the most popular party in France. Perhaps the PS might have done better had its disagreements with the PCF been resolved at the last moment; perhaps it was precisely these disagreements that swelled the vote for the PS because many voters had become convinced of the party's commitment to a policy of responsibility and moderation.

As of mid-1978, the implications of the elections for the political future of Mitterrand were still not clear. According to a poll conducted immediately after the elections, the blame for the Left's defeat was attributed largely to Communist leader Marchais; yet the continuation of Mitterrand's leadership and the direction of the PS may remain in doubt for some time.

APPENDIX

THE COMMON PROGRAM<sup>26</sup>

"The Minimum Threshold"

"From the beginning of the legislative session," it reads in the Common Program, "a minimum threshold of nationalization will be realized."

In the bank and financial sector, the PS and PCF are concerned with the total sector, that is to say:

\*The total of business banks, and deposit banks.

\*The financial establishments who sell credit, mortgages, and credit-leasing.

\*The large private insurance companies, except the mutual ones.

In industry, the minimum threshold of the public sector's extension into the private domain will be achieved in the following sectors:

\*Totally nationalized: underground resources, arms, aerospace and aeronautical industries, electronic and computer industries, chemical industries.

The Government will proceed in the nationalization of the following groups:

\*Dassault, Toussel-Uclaf, Rhône-Poulenc, ITT-France, Thomson-Brandt, Honeywell-Bull, Pechiney Ugine Kuhlmann, Saint-Gobain-Pont-à-Mousson, Compagnie générale d'électricité.

The Government will take a major portion of the shares of the following:

\*In steel and oil (Usinor, Vallourec, Wendel-Sidelor, Schneider, Compagnie française des pétroles-CFR-Total).

\*In air and maritime transportation, the treatment and distribution of water, the financing of telecommunications, superhighway concession stands.

Number of employees in nationalized firms: 650,000 (8% of labor force).

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<sup>26</sup>APPENDIX. "Programme commun: le seuil minimum," Le Point, 25 avril 1977, p. 82.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has dealt with issues which at first glance may seem only tenuously related to one another. Chapter I dealt with both the potential of a President-Parliament confrontation and the shift in power away from the Assembly towards the President. Chapter II dealt with the tradition of protest present in France's past and current regimes. Chapter III was concerned with the possessors of this protest tradition: a rigidly organized but electorally stagnant PCF and a rapidly growing but highly diffuse PS. Chapter IV showed how the regime established a streamlined, more efficient, but less accountable and thus intolerable bureaucracy. The last chapter dealt with the Left -- again, the inheritors of this tradition of protest -- and its attempt to deal with the bureaucratic regime.

Yet there exists a common thread in all these chapters. In each chapter, the lack of constitutional consensus rears its head. To better illustrate how, it is only necessary to ask what the result would be if the Fifth Republic had constitutional consensus. If the paralysis were gone from the French political world, would one fret so often at the flaws in the Constitution? Would there be a tradition of protest as described in this paper? Would the Leftist parties' structures and platform be the same? Would there be the shift to and the problems in a state which is even by western standards extremely technocratic? Finally would there have been

a Common Program? Clearly politics in France without constitutional paralysis would be unrecognizable.

France still lacks constitutional consensus. The antibiotics of the Fifth Republic, in whatever form, have been ineffective against the old virus of constitutional paralysis.

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