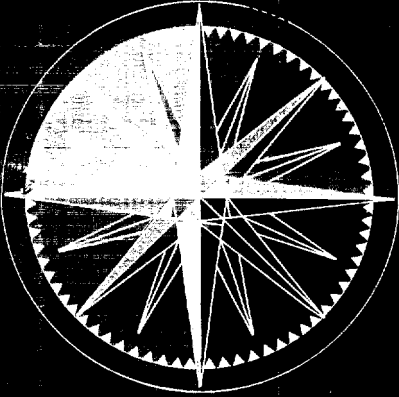


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SPECIAL REPORT

POSITION OF NON-GAULLIST POLITICAL PARTIES IN FRANCE

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

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POSITION OF NON-GAULLIST POLITICAL PARTIES IN FRANCE

The approach of municipal elections this fall and the prospect of a presidential race before the end of 1965 are generating a renewed political awareness in Gaullist France. The principal opposition candidate for the presidency, Socialist Gaston Defferre, has been campaigning seriously since February. Spokesmen for the traditional parties have no illusions that they can oust De Gaulle, but they hope to reassert their place in national activities. They are trying to dispel public apathy toward politics and establish a basis for concerted action in the future. All the parties profess to be adapting themselves to the framework of the Fifth Republic, but the old-line politicians, still in large measure prisoners of the past, have yet to prove that they can overcome their old divisions and face new issues squarely.

Depoliticization

A major psychological hurdle facing the traditional non-Communist parties in their efforts to combat De Gaulle is widespread disinterest in domestic politics. Voter participation in national elections went down from an average of 89.7 percent for the period 1946-56 to 68.7 percent in the first ballot of the 1962 elections. Some of the causes of this growing apathy may be temporary, but others are related to profound changes in French national life.

The whole country became irritated and disenchanted over excessive parliamentary bickering in the final years of the Fourth Republic, and this continues to benefit the Gaullist regime, which is credited with bringing political stability to

France. Moreover De Gaulle, who acceded to power with overwhelming public approval at a time when the country was on the verge of revolution over the Algerian impasse, still is regarded as a deliverer. His success in restoring peace to France --after 23 years during which French forces were constantly engaged in one part of the world or another--has inspired popular acquiescence in his brand of strong executive rule.

Among the more enduring changes that have fostered political complacency is the relative prosperity of the past few years. The lure of affluence and the enjoyment of creature comforts available to a broadening market have blunted the Frenchman's appetite for the ideological squabbles of earlier generations. Also, the

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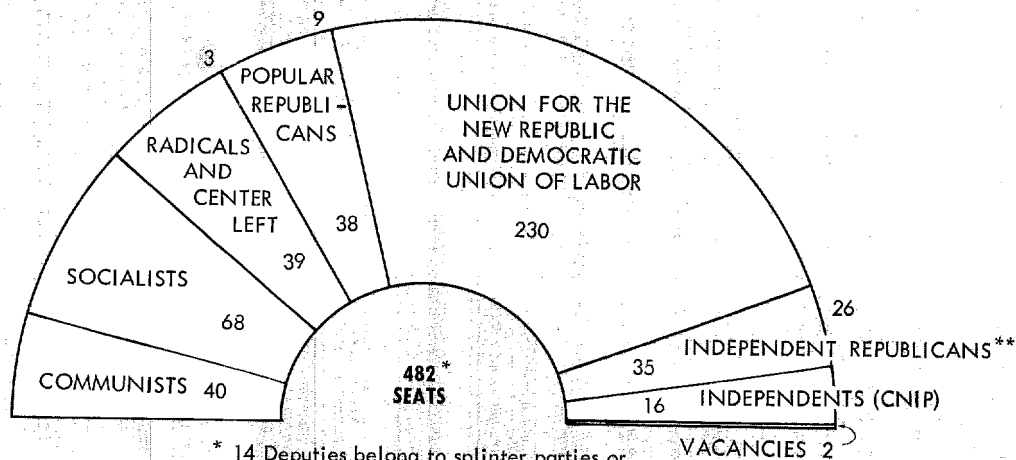
socioeconomic changes which accompanied the accelerated urbanization of the past decade have disrupted old political allegiances, and no would-be successor to De Gaulle has been able to identify himself successfully with the new urban voters to the exclusion of other candidates.

Under the double impact of De Gaulle's strong executive rule and of popular disenchantment with the old-line politicians, the National Assembly with its "baggage" of parties has receded into the shadows. The traditional parties, tending to "re-

member everything and forget nothing," are still divided by political, economic, and clerical issues into five basic groups. The durable French Communist Party (PCF)--the second strongest in terms of votes, after the Gaullist Union for the New Republic (UNR)--now is concentrating on "protecting" the republic from authoritarian Gaullist encroachments and remains subservient to Moscow. The orientation of the remaining four principal parties, all of which support the republican form of government, may be described in the general and theoretical terms of yesterday: the

Party Strengths In
FRENCH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

ELECTED NOVEMBER 1962



* 14 Deputies belong to splinter parties or are unaffiliated and therefore not shown

** Are a pro-Gaullist faction of CNIP

Committed to DeGaulle

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Socialist Party (SFIO) is economically leftist and anticlerical; the Popular Republican Movement (MRP) is somewhat to the left in economic policy but, as France's Christian democratic party, is proclerical; the Radical Socialists are largely anticlerical and somewhat conservative economically; and the Independents (CNIP) are proclerical and also to the right on economic issues. So long as De Gaulle is on the scene, such issues have little relation to political reality.

Bases of Opposition

Substantive political issues are not wanting, but the opposition parties have yet to find a way to exploit them effectively. Despite the touchiness the government has displayed over recent press criticism of defense and foreign aid expenditures, the non-Communist opposition groups have mixed feelings on these issues. Although the left-wing parties are agreed in seeking a larger share of the national income for labor, they have not been able to come up with a common program to achieve this.

The inadequate education budget is potentially the most popular issue. Over the long run it may prove to be the most damaging indictment of the Gaullist regime because of the bitterness it is generating among youth squeezed out of college and university. The Fifth Republic has failed to provide

the accelerated school expansion program clearly demanded by the birth statistics. Although the percentage of those receiving a complete lycee education and going on to the university has increased from approximately 5 percent of the appropriate age groups in 1955 to 12 percent in 1964, the pace of improvement has not kept abreast of the demand. This issue has appeal among all social classes, but not to the point of assuring a united opposition. Nor is there much likelihood of arousing general support over the government's blatant use of the state-run radio and television networks to the UNR's own political ends.

On foreign policy issues the opposition appears lethargic, as in their reaction to Foreign Minister Couve de Murville's broad statements on foreign affairs to the National Assembly on 28 April. The opposition on that occasion concentrated on criticisms of method rather than substance. Only on De Gaulle's approach to European unity and Atlantic solidarity is there evident resistance, but even here it is difficult to rally a united opposition in a political confrontation.

In sum, public dissatisfaction is clear on a number of specific points, but it is not sufficiently strong or concentrated to give De Gaulle any serious trouble.

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Opposition Unity Efforts

Most of the opposition parties acknowledge that there is general satisfaction with the institutions of the Fifth Republic, and particularly the presidential system. Only the Communists and SFIO Secretary General Guy Mollet state clearly that they wish to return to legislative supremacy. The opposition parties also see alike on many foreign and domestic questions, and several of them have attempted to surmount their parochial ideological differences.

A year ago, leaders of the three principal non-Marxist opposition parties--the Popular Republicans, the Radical Socialists, and the Independents--formed a study and coordination committee to find ways to organize a broad movement of centrist opinion, but have shown little progress thus far despite a decision announced late last month to form a new "French Democratic Movement" by this fall. Spokesmen for all three parties say they would consider supporting such a movement if the Socialists could be induced to cooperate with it. The SFIO, however, has proved skittish about looking to the right for electoral assistance.

Most right-wing Socialist leaders would be willing to enter an alliance with fellow anti-clerical Radical Socialists. They are reluctant, however, to associate closely with the MRP

in view of the continuing controversy over state aid to church schools, and they would consider it virtually impossible to commit themselves to ties with the "reactionary" CNIP.

In December 1963 the Socialists initiated an effort to form their own "mass support" movement on the left. This effort involved a "preparatory" study conference sparked by SFIO Deputy Secretary General Georges Brutelle, who disapproves of the party's "tactical" cooperation with the Communists. The conference included representatives of the splinter United Socialist Party (PSU), the Christian-oriented labor union, agricultural and student groups, and the principal autonomous political clubs--groups not affiliated with any particular political ideology.

Three distinct factions emerged at the conference. One which wanted an informal movement of the left for the principal purpose of backing SFIO presidential candidate Defferre, was supported by two of the most prominent political clubs, the Club Jean Moulin and the Club des Jacobins, by the leftist intellectual newspaper L'Express, and by Francois Mitterrand of the left splinter party, the Democratic and Socialist Union of the Resistance (UDSR). Another faction, supported by Gilles Martinet of the PSU, wanted an SFIO rapprochement with the Communist Party, with the PSU acting as "a bridge"

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for the purpose of formulating a common program. The third faction, headed by SFIO Secretary General Guy Mollet, wanted to expand the party following by devising a program designed to appeal to a wide spectrum of leftist opinion, but it opposed opening the party's formal membership rolls to newcomers.

None of these ideas for rallying the left into an enlarged social democratic party has gotten off the ground. The only effective interparty cooperation has been the "tactical" electoral understandings between the Socialists and the Communists. Both parties gained from these arrangements in the national elections of November 1962 and the cantonal elections of March 1964. On these two occasions, each party on the second ballot withdrew candidates in those constituencies where the other party was more favorably placed to win. The SFIO and PCF party newspapers are currently engaged in a public debate delineating those differences which prevent the cementing together of a popular front.

Other Political Forces

The impotence of the old-line parties has led to a revival of a political tradition which had its origin in the revolution of 1789--the autonomous political clubs. A number of leftist political theorists have organized these clubs with the purpose of devising programs around which new parties with

genuine mass appeal might be formed. They include influential journalists, trade union officials, scientists, and a liberal sprinkling of disenchanted politicians of the Fourth Republic. They are stressing such popular themes as social assistance, economic expansion, increased worker participation in industrial development, an equitable farm policy, European unity, and Atlantic cooperation, in an effort to evolve comprehensive platforms on which broad social democratic accord could be reached.

The almost singular motivation behind this effort to regroup the opposition parties into large, more effective formations is, of course, to defeat the UNR at the polls. Ironically, however, it is in a sense a response to pressure from De Gaulle himself, who has long castigated political factionalism. His institutional innovations of the Fifth Republic are aimed at reducing the number of parties and encouraging them to seek broader bases. De Gaulle has remained generally aloof from the parties, preferring to play the role of presidential arbiter. However, by tacitly encouraging the fortunes of his massive supporting party, the UNR, he is in effect placing pressure on the splintered opposition to come together in order to survive. He hopes that two or three major parties will eventually emerge, which would improve the outlook for continuing stability after he leaves office.

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The constitutional revision of October 1962 to provide for popular election of the president was also a step in this direction. The effect of this was to force opposition parties and groups with broadly similar programs to unite in order to put up presidential candidates capable of attracting a majority.

Party coalescence is also the general objective of the current UNR attempt to reform the municipal electoral system, although a political motive is also present. The legislation proposed would oblige the parties in cities of over 30,000 population to merge into groupings sufficiently large to challenge the UNR. This would be made necessary because voters would no longer be permitted to split tickets, and parties would not be permitted to combine for the second round.

The Gaullist party hopes that the resulting polarization would rally to its banner large numbers of MRP and Independent voters. In this, the UNR would be counting on their fear of the tactical arrangements between the SFIO and PCF. There is, however, a danger that a Communist-Socialist popular front may be found in several key cities if this legislation is passed.

Regardless of the effect of the proposed municipal election law, closer Socialist-Communist relations are developing, and the presidential election will accelerate the trend. The non-

Communist left has long nurtured the hope of using the PCF's voting strength without having to make any commitments to the party as such. The relaxation of East-West tensions and the desire to unseat De Gaulle combine to encourage an accommodation with the Communists for the presidential race. Maurice Duverger, for example, recently argued in Le Monde that the PCF is "becoming more and more a party like the others." He envisages the possibility of Gaston Defferre's election in 1965 as a result of a tacit Communist agreement to back him without according him the formal endorsement which would scare off potential supporters to the right of the Socialists.

Communist leader Maurice Thorez, however, has tried to impress the electorate that he has an alternative to supporting Defferre or proposing a PCF candidacy. He told the PCF central committee in late March, with ample publicity, that he approved the broad lines of De Gaulle's foreign policy, thus endeavoring to imply a willingness to see the general re-elected. The Communists certainly approved the disruptive effect Gaullist policy has had on the Atlantic Alliance, and Thorez' statements therefore take on a measure of plausibility. At this stage, therefore, Defferre cannot be sure that the SFIO will gain the Communists' support without making promises or other commitments to them.

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Prospects for a Defferre Victory

In any event, the appearance of more leftist opposition candidates, such as Radical Socialist Senator Andre Cornu who recently decided to run, will tend to dissipate De Gaulle's opposition and reduce Defferre's chances.

The supporters of both the UNR and Defferre have been impressed by the extensive US experience with mass parties. Public opinion polling in France is coming into wider use and Theodore White's book, The Making of a President, 1960, is being carefully studied. Both UNR politicians and the several leftist political clubs backing Defferre have shown marked interest in campaigning "a l'americaine." It is not clear, however, whether these groups fully comprehend

how much depends on grass-roots organization in US party practice.

If De Gaulle chooses to seek re-election, he could probably defeat even a candidate endorsed by both the SFIO and the PCF. However, the UNR's political future is still so linked to De Gaulle's active role that his withdrawal would unleash attacks on it from all sides. Even if this happened, the old party lineups of the pre-Gaullist era would be unlikely to revive. Some coalescence along the lines encouraged by the current institutional framework now seems much more probable. This would in general be a positive and enduring improvement. The major drawback, however, will continue to be the threat of a Socialist-Communist alliance.

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