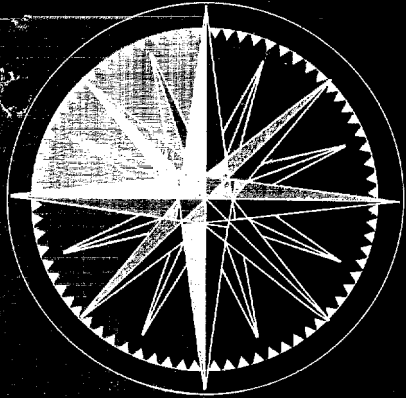


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SPECIAL REPORT

CURRENT GOALS OF THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

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CURRENT GOALS OF THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY

The French Communist Party (PCF) continues to base its program on loyalty to Moscow, unseating the Gaullist regime, and reinstating parliamentary supremacy in France. Currently its dominant political objective is unity of action with the French Socialist Party (SFIO) which it would use to help it to break out of isolation and win control of the government. The death of party president Maurice Thorez on 11 July will not affect this strategy, and may intensify efforts toward common action with the Socialists and "other elements of the democratic left." As the Soviet threat to Europe appears to wane, part of the French left, notably the SFIO, may be increasingly attracted by the prospect of a return to power offered by collaboration with the PCF.

PCF Strength

The PCF is the most tightly organized major Communist party in Western Europe and the most dependably Moscow-oriented. It is second to the Italian Communist Party as the most powerful in domestic politics. In a country with a population of 48 million, the PCF has an estimated 250,000 to 300,000 members, but it can draw nearly a quarter of the popular vote in national elections. Socialist support would give a new "popular front" more electoral strength than the Gaullist Party (UNR), which won a dominant position with only one third of the first-ballot vote in the 1962 National Assembly election.

Emergence From Isolation

Communist Party leaders are now optimistically estimating their prospects for close ties with the Socialists as better than they were in 1936 or 1945. They cite as evidence the several

successful joint actions of their respective unions, notably during the coal strike of March 1963, and joint efforts in other fields such as the campaign against a nuclear strike force.

Anxious to exploit fully the increasing Socialist commitment to "tactical" electoral cooperation with them, the Communists urge their "fellow Marxists" to look at the record. Beginning with the November 1962 national election, both parties have gained notably in the number of national and local representatives. During the November election SFIO Secretary General Guy Mollet directed his followers to back the Communists in constituencies where the alternative on the second ballot was a Gaullist. The PCF reciprocated by withdrawing candidates in 35 constituencies where the Socialists were the best placed anti-Gaullists.

Although the support diverted to the Socialists cost the PCF some loss on the second ballot

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in 1962 (21.8 percent of the popular vote to 21.3 percent), the Communists were able to breach the isolation they had experienced in the 1950s, and to increase their National Assembly representation from 10 to 41 seats. In the March 1964 cantonal elections, through similar Socialist cooperation, the PCF again escaped isolation and almost doubled its departmental General Council seats from 50 to 99. For their part, the Socialists in 1962 were able to increase their electoral strength from 12.6 percent on the first ballot to 15.2 percent on the second, and to increase their National Assembly seats from 43 to 64. In the 1964 cantonal elections the SFIO managed, with PCF support, a modest increase from 267 to 286 General Council seats.

SFIO-PCF Dialogue

In January 1964 the Socialists initiated a public dialogue with the Communists in their newspaper Le Populaire. They delineated Communist positions with which they felt there could be no compromise, notably the PCF's subservience to Moscow, its ultimate objective of a single-party state, and its lack of internal party democracy. However, they also alluded to common Marxist goals.

The PCF reply in March in L'Humanité to the principal Socialist accusations seemed half-hearted and vaguely worded. It reserved its few eloquent pronouncements to elaborate on social and political objectives that should appeal to all Marxists. The PCF urged joint ac-

tion to bring about increased outlays for education, to end public financing of church-controlled schools, to improve housing, to expand workers' benefits, and to oppose France's nuclear policy. Such mutually acceptable objectives were supported by the appeal for "joint action between Communists, Socialists, and all other democrats" to defeat "the personal power of De Gaulle" and "re-establish" democratic institutions in France. This call for action, by stressing legislative supremacy, appealed directly to Guy Mollet, SFIO secretary general, the only major non-Communist political figure publicly committed to this theme. The PCF response to the Socialist challenge tried to blur the basic ideological differences between the two parties with a siren song detailing the immediate advantages of closer collaboration.

**Faalty to Moscow
and Party Discipline**

The PCF's campaign to win SFIO converts to a "popular front" has been accompanied by relentless efforts to assure strict uniformity within its own ranks. At the 17th party congress in May the leadership reaffirmed its Moscow orientation and warned the relatively small pro-Chinese elements and the somewhat larger "impartial" segment to conform. The congress vigorously decried the "deformations and schismatic activity of the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party" and called for a world Communist conference to condemn their actions.

Party president Thorez' death on 11 July is not expected

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to alter the strong pro-Soviet stance of the PCF in the current Soviet-Chinese feud.

The "impartial" PCF membership includes the Union of Communist Students (UEC) which follows the Italian Communist lead and argues that the Chinese "should be heard." The PCF failed to coerce the students by forcing the dissolution of their congress last spring, and later withdrew support of their publication when it wished to print an article by Italian Communist Party secretary general Togliatti in preference to one by Thorez. The students nevertheless published the controversial article. The party congress therefore decided to merge the UEC and other party youth groups into a single body directly under top party control.

Greater Internal Democracy

The party congress tried to balance its disciplinarian tactics with a show of internal democracy, both to help persuade its own Italian-oriented deviationists and to impress the Socialists. In the interest of "advancing democracy within the PCF" a resolution was adopted calling for the election by secret ballot of party officials at all levels including the central committee. The "democratic centralism" of the PCF, however, remains essentially unaffected, since the one candidate permitted to run for each vacancy must be confirmed by nominating commissions controlled by the party organization. Voters may simply

approve or disapprove a candidate selected by the central authority. Critics in the party who urged a free voter selection of officials were admonished for being "overly attached to bourgeois democracy."

Other efforts to present an image of "democratization" seem equally unconvincing. The most striking internal initiative, perhaps, was the replacement of old-guard "Stalinist" Maurice Thorez as secretary general by Waldeck-Rochet, a Moscow-trained agricultural specialist. This was partly to appease the more liberally inclined PCF elements as well as old-line Socialists who found it difficult to forget caustic exchanges of the past. Waldeck-Rochet, however, is a proven party stalwart, and Thorez had been assigned to the newly created post of party president with the understanding that he would remain active in the party affairs. Thorez' death aboard a Soviet liner on 11 July precludes an evaluation of just how his authority may have been affected. It is doubtful, however, that his death will greatly influence the organizational procedures of the PCF, since Waldeck-Rochet as 25X1
the real "power behind the scenes" for the past few years.

The party congress also reorganized the central committee, ostensibly to inject some young blood into the party leadership. The ages of nearly one third of the 70 full members now average in their mid-30s; but

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most members were previously alternates and are tested orthodox leaders of the provincial organizations. The secretariat, which was decreased in strength from seven to five members, now includes a new one, a 31-year-old former mechanic from provincial France.

Outlook

The meager relaxation of "democratic centralism" confirms the Socialists' criticism that the PCF prohibits freedom of choice within its own organization. The SFIO's appetite, however, for mutually beneficial pragmatic cooperation remains unimpaired. This is apparent in its preparation for the municipal elections scheduled for early 1965.

The recently passed municipal election law introduced a rigid list system in cities of over 30,000 population, removing the option of ticket splitting and party combinations on the second ballot. Parties, consequently, must form viable combinations on the first ballot. The Gaullist UNR sponsored the law to force polarization and to win the smaller center and center-left parties to the Gaullist banner because of their presumed fear of a leftist, Communist-dominated "popular front." The SFIO is thereby encouraged into further arrangements with the PCF to score in the municipal

elections. Socialist leaders allege, however, that such arrangements will continue to be purely tactical.

The PCF has avoided designating a candidate for the presidential race, which must constitutionally be held before the end of 1965. It continues to insist that it will not support the SFIO candidate, Gaston Defferre, unless some understanding on a common platform is reached between the two parties. Defferre has stated publicly that as the only viable candidate of the left he can count on PCF support without making any commitments to the Communists. The arithmetic of the elections would clearly indicate, he points out, that if the PCF presented a candidate, the Communists would place second after De Gaulle in plurality votes on the first ballot, and would thus be pitted against the general in the runoff. Virtually all non-Communists would then probably rally to De Gaulle as the better of the alternatives, inflicting a stunning defeat on the PCF. To avoid such an anti-Communist coalescence--and incidentally an impressive Gaullist victory--the PCF must cooperate with the more universally acceptable SFIO and acquiesce in a Socialist candidate. The PCF, despite this cogent argument, is still demanding some quid pro quo for such cooperation, and at the recent party congress

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Waldeck-Rochet flatly declared that the PCF would not support the SFIO candidate without a clear statement on a common program.

It is probable that this "electoral arithmetic" looms large in Waldeck-Rochet's thinking, and that he may ultimately settle for less than a common platform to support the SFIO presidential candidate. A relaxation of PCF resolve on this issue, however, may encourage a

further reappraisal of the party's position on current issues, and party elements eager to capitalize on Thorez' death could insist on a more open approach to other parties on all questions. This implies a threat to direct controls by Moscow, but it also suggests a real danger for the splintered democratic left in France. [redacted] 25X1

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is surprisingly free of apprehension concerning collaboration with the Communists. [redacted] 25X1

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