

Gaullist-PCF Nonaggression Pact Move To Ensure Defeat Of Socialists

With less than two weeks until election day, voter polls in France are predicting a narrowing margin of victory for the French Socialist Party over the present majority coalition. At this point, the consolidation of a rank and file non-aggression pact between local Gaullist and Communist Party (PCF) constituencies and candidates

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is the key to preventing a disastrous "left" victory. Such a nonaggression pact is already taking shape on the highest level of national leadership — indicating the possible emergence of a national unity "public safety" government of the sort proposed by Gaullist "baron" Michel Debre. It is on the local level where the votes are counted, however, that this pact can most significantly alter the outcome of the March elections.

The momentum in France now is clearly moving against Francois Mitterrand, leader of the French Socialist Party (SP) and the nation's principal agent for the interests of the City of London monetarist community. The consensus across the French political spectrum, with the exception of a rag-tag collection of Atlanticist centrists and Mitterrand's staunchest backers, is that Mitterrand must be barred from political power if France is to survive. Mitterrand himself recognized his precarious position recently when he said "the Socialist Party is sandwiched between the majority (the Gaullists and supporters of President Giscard —ed.) and the Communist Party," the SP's caustically critical allies in the now-disintegrating Union of the Left. Both, he said, "have lost their senses." The London *Economist* of Feb. 11, acknowledged the same threat to Mitterrand, and more, in an article entitled "Will it take a shotgun to get them to the altar?" which raised the specter of the Debre-proposed national unity government of Communists and Gaullists.

At the top, this "sandwiching" is taking place as leading Gaullist figures, including the president of the Gaullist party (RPR — Rally for the Republic) Jacques Chirac, focus their attacks on the "left" almost exclusively on Mitterrand and the SP, often borrowing ammunition from the Communists. In one instance, Chirac went so far as to quote Joseph Stalin on the incompetence of the Socialists in dealing with matters of economic policy. At a mass RPR rally in Paris Feb. 18 of some 100,000 supporters, according to reports, Chirac accused the socialists of being liars and hypocrites, adding that PCF General Secretary Georges Marchais could testify to this.

Cooperation in the Countryside

On the local level, which is the determining factor being shaped by Chirac, Debre, and others at the top, the evidence of Gaullist-PCF collaboration is abundant. The weekly *Vendredi-Samedi-Dimanche* of Feb. 2 reports that meetings have been taking place between PCF and RPR leaders at the regional level in the Hauts-de-Sein, Centre, and Sud-Ouest departments, to conclude nonaggression pacts and even to exchange usefully damaging information on the Socialist Party. The article also correctly points out that during Chirac's many barnstorming tours all across the country (he has visited literally hundreds of towns in the pre-electoral period), he has encountered little, if any, opposition from the PCF. Even his trip to the Val-de-Marne, PCF head Marchais's own electoral district, passed without the slightest sign of PCF counterorganizing.

Given the closeness of the March 12 election and March 19 runoff, in which all 491 seats of the National Assembly come up for renewal, such local level pacts in which, for instance, a PCF candidate might withdraw after the first round and not call on his constituency to switch to the SP candidate as would have been automatic if the Union of the Left accords between the PCF and SP were still really in effect, could have a significant, if not determining, effect in the overall outcome of the elections.

The most recent polls conducted in various newspapers indicate that while the "left" still holds a marginal but narrowing advantage in terms of overall percentage of vote intentions in the country (now estimated at about 50 percent for the "left" and 46 percent for the majority), because of the distribution of the votes in different districts, the majority is now being given an advantage in terms of the total number of seats in the Assembly. In such a tight race, a matter of a few hundred votes not going over to the SP and instead towards the RPR in several key districts could be decisive. Such a tactic is being discussed, for example in the 14th electoral district in Paris, where there will be a three-way race in the first round between a Socialist candidate, the PCF's chief economist Philippe Herzog, and leading old-time Gaullist Alexandre Sanguinetti (see below).

The Gaullist Grapevine

Politically useful anti-Socialist information has been passing hands between the PCF and Gaullists, and some public relations give an indication of its nature. The PCF is taking some of the SP's dirty laundry out of the basket and airing it in public, reminding French voters of Socialist Mitterrand's misdeeds *before* his synthetic "left" turn during the 1960s. Marchais reminded an audience of 50,000 supporters at a Feb. 16 Paris rally,

that it was Mitterrand who, as a government minister in 1956, helped to perpetuate the war with Algeria — recalling Mitterrand's infamous "the only negotiation with Algeria is war" speech. Georges Seguy, head of the Communist-allied trade union, the CGT, at the same time recounted publicly that during the May 1968 rebellion which rocked France, Mitterrand demanded that the CGT, the largest trade union in France, boycott the Grenelle talks for wage settlements to end the strikes. Seguy refused to join in this effort to topple the De Gaulle-Pompidou government.

Another frequent Communist reminder these days is that it was the Socialists who in 1947 kicked the de Gaulle-appointed Communist ministers out of the government.

The present PCF-Caullist tactical alliance is being countered by the "Union of French Democracy, a coalition including President Giscard's Republican Party, Lecanuet's Centrists, and the Radical Party of Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber who, it is expected will try to make a similar pact with the Socialists. However, this coalition has been unable to get even the support of Prime Minister Raymond Barre, whom President Giscard had asked to head up the "non-Gaullist" component of the majority. It is also questionable whether Servan-Schreiber will be able to politically recoup from his recent attack on the PCF as a racist organization and Chirac's recent characterization of him as "a man who talks about change the way old men talk about little girls."

—D. Sloan

French Press Slams Socialists

Comments appeared in Le Figaro Feb. 1 by Edmond Bergheaud on the history of Socialist Party sabotage of PCF participation in the French Government:

Evoking the formation in Algiers of the "French Committee for National Liberation," General de Gaulle wrote in his memoirs: "And what of the Communists? The part which they played in the resistance, as well as my intention to ensure that their forces be incorporated with those of the nation, led me to the decision of putting two of them in the government."... (After de Gaulle's departure from the government in January 1946) relations between the Communists and Socialists become tense... The inevitable crisis occurs in May 1947 under the (Socialist) Ramadier government... Ramadier puts an end to their functions. Leon Blum approves this measure. So the Communists end up in the opposition. And they were pushed there by a Socialist. Since that day, the era of suspicions has continued to exist between the two formations of the left.

Charges of anti-working class subversion were leveled at Mitterrand by CGT head Georges Seguy in a Feb. 12 interview on Europe No. 1, concerning the May, 1968 wage negotiations:

...On the eve of the Grenelle conference (for comprehensive wage and social negotiations to end the strikes — ed.) we received a delegation from the Federation of the Democratic and Socialist left (FGDS — Mitterrand's launching pad for taking over the Socialist Party — ed.) headed by François Mitterrand and Guy Mollet, who came to ask us, in a way, to give up the idea of going to Grenelle in order to facilitate the accession of a left government to power... We told our interlocutors that in the event of an agreement between the left parties which would take up the demands that we (the CGT) were fighting for, this hypothesis of considering the Pompidou government as an invalid interlocutor could eventually be food for thought... We had to remind François Mitterrand, who found our demands excessive,... that we did not consider the FGDS as negotiators of social problems...

Le Matin on the Gaullist-Communist Alliance

The local-level PCF-Gaullist nonaggression pact in Paris' 14th District electoral campaign was analyzed in the Feb. 22 Le Matin:

(The PCF's candidate, their chief economist Philippe Herzog) devotes all his time working in his district: housing meetings, factory meetings, subways, debates, typical of a Communist campaign. The contrary of Alexandre Sanguinetti who hardly shows up in the streets. His friends have reproached him with not having been hard enough with Philippe Herzog during a public debate. Perhaps because he wants to woo the votes of the Communist electorate in case of a Gaullist-SP duel in the runoff.

Economist Sympathizes With Mitterrand

The London Economist, empathizing with the Socialist Party in its present difficulties with the PCF, printed an article Feb. 11, entitled "Does It Take A Shotgun to Get Them to the Altar":

...The Mitterrand camp is now seriously wondering whether Mr. Marchais has a totally different kind of government in mind. Weighing his expressed desire to have the Communists in the cabinet against the roadblocks he is throwing in the Socialist path, the Mitterrand team feels he could be angling for a government of national unity. The idea has already been aired by certain prominent Gaullists, though it is hardly a policy subscribed to by Mr. Chirac, the Gaullist leader. At any rate, it is the only way in which the Communists have entered government before in France (they contributed ministers to General de Gaulle's postwar administration). Mr. Mitterrand, voicing the theory on Monday, warned Mr. Marchais against "an absurd, anti-historic coalition."