

The Longo Mai commune: control point for Swiss terrorist operations?

by Joelle Leconte in Paris

On April 21 the Longo Mai "agricultural commune" held a press conference in Paris to respond to recent media revelations concerning the circumstances surrounding the February death of Lieutenant-Colonel Nut, one of France's top counter-espionage agents. The media had revealed that Nut, who was responsible for the South-East regional bureau of the DGSE (France's CIA), was killed while conducting an investigation into the Longo Mai sect.

The president of Longo Mai, François Bouchardeau—son of the newly appointed Minister of Environment Huguette Bouchardeau—was the group's spokesman at the press conference which turned into nothing more nor less than a series of attacks against the Parti Ouvrier Européen, the French party headed by Lyndon LaRouche's principal political collaborator in France, Jacques Cheminade.

Why did LaRouche's collaborators come under fire? Most likely it is because in France and internationally, LaRouche and his collaborators have shaken plans for a second "May 1968" throughout Europe which is planned both by the extreme right as well as by the friends of the KGB.

From all available evidence, the DGSE suspected Longo Mai of operating in conjunction with foreign powers. The headquarters of the sect, near Forcalquier, is in the middle of a zone in which the Plateau of Albion and its strategic missiles, the Cadarache nuclear research center and the strategic petroleum reserve of France are located.

According to the right-wing newspaper *Minute*, the Soviet Consul and Vice-Consul of Marseilles have visited Longo Mai. They were among the 47 Soviet diplomats and journalists expelled from France in March on charges of espionage, one month after Nut's assassination.

But terrorism, rather than espionage, seems to be the behind the scenes activity at Longo Mai. This hypothesis has been raised several times since 1977, but always quashed: the sect has too many powerful protectors in high-level places.

Revolution down on the farm

In the year 1972, two leftist grouplets, Hydra from Switzerland and Spartakus from West Germany and Austria, held

a conference in Basel, Switzerland, and elaborated a back to the land charter for a group that took the name Longo Mai. Longo Mai, in Occitan, means "Long may it last." (*Occitan* is the ancient language of southern France, which has become a rallying-point for certain of the exotic regional-separatist movements attempting to destroy the centralized state.) The first "pioneer camps" were established in the south of France, in the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence region.

Of the founding organizations, Spartakus was based among young workers in Siemens factories—just like the original Red Brigade cells in Milan during the early 1970s. Among the founding members from Hydra, Gotthard Klingler is still one of the most important leaders of the group. But not all of Longo Mai's founders were young leftist workers. One of them, Hermann Bershen, was a colonel in the Swiss army.

Longo Mai was launched publicly in 1973, with much fanfare from the leftist media like *Le Nouvel Observateur* magazine. The sect is in every respect the brainchild of the Malthusian Club of Rome, which spawned the back-to-the-land ideology that took hold in the demoralized atmosphere that followed the May 1968 student upheaval in France.

In the early period the typical recruit, culled from a "progressive" religious group, a technical school oriented toward "appropriate technologies," or a youth group, would be sent for a training period in a farm associated with Longo Mai's Europe-wide network.

There, the disoriented adolescent would be forced to submit to the sexual and other promiscuity of communal living. In addition to homosexuality and sodomy (if only the sheep of the Pyrénées could speak!), various forms of group "therapy" were practiced in order to further degrade the individual and induce psychosis. Only after these stages would the recruit be considered ripe for para-military training and sent to the main camp at Forcalquier.

In Austria, the group was accused of terrorism and assimilation into the Baader-Meinhof gang, West Germany's leading "left" terrorist band. It is known that a member from the Hydra group in Switzerland was involved in arms traffic for

the Baader-Meinhof. An Austrian member of Spartakus from Vienna, Jacob Mytteis, sought refuge in Longo Mai's camp in Forcalquier after a warrant was issued for him in Austria, and the Swiss and West German authorities refused to allow him entry into their countries. Numerous other West German "militants" who were having trouble with the law were also taken in by Longo Mai. During the early years of Longo Mai, then Minister of the Interior Raymond Marcellin had several foreign members of the cult expelled from France on charges related to state security.

Counterculture and big business

The worker's production cooperative (SCOP) of Longo Mai was created in June 1973 in Forcalquier, and its farm some few miles away in Limans. Its current president is François Bouchardeau, the son of the radical Minister of Environment. Some 40 men and women live there now, along with a dozen or so children born there.

The leader of the Limans commune, Roland Perrot, aka "Remi," is more than 50 years old. He is described by deserters as a megalomaniac, imposing his will and overt homosexual desires on the rest of the commune. During the Algerian war he is known to have begun collecting contributions within the left to create a deserters' underground. The project fell apart, but the money was never returned.

There are seven associated farms existing in France, Belgium, Switzerland, and Austria, more than a dozen "craft" businesses, as well as a coffee shop, garage, hotel, printing company and so forth. A Paris office was maintained for a time, in the same location where later the Friends of the Earth and still later Greenpeace had its offices. A newsletter is published in Basel. The group has its own radio station, as well as its own flying club. Longo Mai had just submitted an application for opening an advanced pilots school at Vinon airport when Colonel Nut opened his investigation.

According to Longo Mai's spokesman, the community acquired a plane and submitted this application because eight of its members had received pilot's licenses during the days of their "adventures in Costa Rica," and they were concerned about maintaining their validity. This story has in no way diminished suspicions about the group's involvement in trafficking. Nor have the group's many farms located near the borders of France, Italy and Switzerland.

United Nations complicit?

Since 1973, Longo Mai has also carried out "charitable" operations in Central and South America, first involving Chilean refugees and Sandinistas from Nicaragua. This operation was the pretext for massive fundraising drives in Switzerland and received the support of the United Nations High Commission on Refugees. Longo Mai's leaders claimed to have brought 200 Nicaraguan refugees back to Switzerland, but there were in reality never more than 31. A scandal broke out in Switzerland, where the refugees were blatantly exploited as cheap labor in the agricultural camps, and as

props for fundraising drives.

Toward 1976-77, Longo Mai attempted to establish a "model agricultural community" in Costa Rica. Two tracts of land were purchased in San Isidro. This, and an office in the capital, San José, still belong to Longo Mai.

The bankers from Basel

Longo Mai's international infrastructure is directed from a bureau in Basel. Colonel Nut was said to be particularly interested in investigating these men in three-piece suits who used to visit Longo Mai from Switzerland. The Basel bureau maintains the computerized listing of Longo Mai's more than 100,000 supporters, who contributed some 60 million francs (about \$10 million) during the 1970s. The accountant in a certain Mr. Zaugg.

According to the press, Longo Mai has received large amounts of funding from the Verein Bank of Basel, as well as certain large Swiss firms, including the Hoffman-LaRoche pharmaceutical firm. In the latter case, the funding has taken place through Longo Mai's Basel representative, Gotthard Klingler, the son of one of the firm's directors. The Crédit Agricole and the Banque Rothschild have also been involved in funding operations.

According to some reports, several former members of the Secret Army Organization (OAS), the guerrilla group that was responsible for numerous assassination attempts against the life of Charles de Gaulle, helped to found Longo Mai. According to another report, the director of Longo Mai's publishing house is a former SS member.

This opens up the possibility that Longo Mai, despite its "progressive" cover, is a joint asset of the KGB and the Nazi networks represented in Switzerland by the financier François Genoud. Another fact that is highly suggestive of this possibility is that the Siemens company out of which the core founders came, is closely associated with the Siemens Foundation headed by Armin Mohler, the author of "The Conservative Revolution," the bible of the European pagan "New Right."

In 1980, a group of university professors gave a press conference in Switzerland in support of Longo Mai, in response to a series of articles published by the social democratic newspaper *Arbeiter Zeitung* of Basel. Among them was Professor Pierre Fornallaz, director of the Zurich-based Center for Appropriate Technologies and Social Ecology. The center develops "soft" technology programs for governments and corporations, according to the prescriptions of the Club of Rome and World Bank.

Over the years, Longo Mai has also received support from international institutions such as the International Labor Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the U.N., the Council of Europe, and the European Community. Club of Rome member Sicco Mansholt—German Green Party leader Petra Kelly's former employer—and ex-Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky have also supported the Longo Mai cult.