

## Report from Paris by Sophie Tanapura

### May '68 or February '34?

*The "State Department Socialists" hope to use the growing national upheaval to win control of Mitterrand.*

Student strikes in the Paris universities and key provincial towns as well as violent peasant riots and angry demonstrations by small businessmen have placed the following question on everyone's mind in France: Will there be a new May 1968, in reverse?

Social unrest is again originating from a radicalized student milieu and joining up with discontent in other sectors, due to economic crisis. "In reverse" refers, of course, to the fact that the upheavals this time are instigated by the right against a left-wing government.

Sources say that through François de Grossouvre, a troubleshooter for the President, the Elysée is trying to abort the "May '68 in reverse" from the inside, to the point of paying some Trotskyists as provocateurs.

By conceding to certain sectoral demands, the government is buying time but is not solving the underlying economic problems, and the chaos is likely to re-occur this fall. We may be heading for a repeat of the February 1934 situation in France, when right-wing populist rioters gained the support of the Communists in the streets.

French farmers all over the country are up in arms: "Buy French, Eat French" is their slogan. And in Paris, a commando of some dozen shopkeepers unloaded 200 kilos of meat bits in the Latour-Maubourg office of the Centre d'Etudes des Revenus et des Coûts, in reaction to "slanders" against their populist trade union, the CID-UNATI, led by Gerard Nicoud.

To find the reasons for the destabilization, one must look beyond the peasants' rage over pork imports or the latest bomb explosions. A battery of forces abroad, ranging from the U.S. State Department and the British Foreign Office to the Western European peace movement and the Nazi International of Swiss banker François Genoud, wants to either bring down or totally capture President Mitterrand.

The Mitterrand government's potential for collaborating with the Reagan administration to stabilize "hot spots" in the Mideast and Africa, Mitterrand's openness to the new strategic defense policy announced by Reagan on March 23, and the possibility that Mitterrand will launch an effort to transfer technology to the underdeveloped sector—all this sticks in the throat of both the "right" and the "left."

When socialist Jean-Pierre Cot, representing his party's anti-growth environmentalist faction, visited New York last month, he predicted that "chaos and social unrest" would force Mitterrand to reverse gears and push for disarmament. Cot's associate Alain Touraine wrote in the *Quotidien de Paris* that Mitterrand should dump the Communists by autumn and boost the corporatist Cot faction, headed by Michel Rocard.

Certain figures in the opposition, such as Charles Pasqua of the Gaullist RPR, think that by stirring up turmoil, they can move in as President Mitterrand's power is weakened.

What is more likely to occur in the immediate future is the governing of France by a center-left coalition, in which the Socialists but not the Communists would remain. But in neither of these political combinations is anyone coming up with an industrial recovery program for France.

The insurgencies against Mitterrand had been building for at least a year. Then, in the space of about eight weeks, the "May '68 in reserve" scenario started to go into motion.

Student agitation, often with the support of the professors, was stirred against the new Savary university education reform, named after the Socialist Education Minister. The reform concerned examination procedures designed to weed out students before they arrive onto an ever-shrinking job market. Extreme-right wing elements of the Le Pen party (PFN) have already infiltrated several student groups and are prepared to radicalize the atmosphere even further. Law students rioting in the street are screaming that they want a king—the Orleanist Comte de Paris.

The left, at the campuses it controls, faced a *fait accompli* and felt themselves forced to join in the action. The Communist Party (PCF) is divided: elements controlled by Soviet party chief Andropov are ready to help bring down the government, in which their party is a junior partner, while others disagree.

The attitude of the PCF will do a lot to determine whether the trouble grows. June 19 will be the day to watch. The PCF-controlled peace movement has called a national march for peace, to which they have, among others, invited the West German "greenies." The turnout will be a key indicator as to the Communists' role this fall when the Pershing II and cruise missiles are due to arrive in Europe.