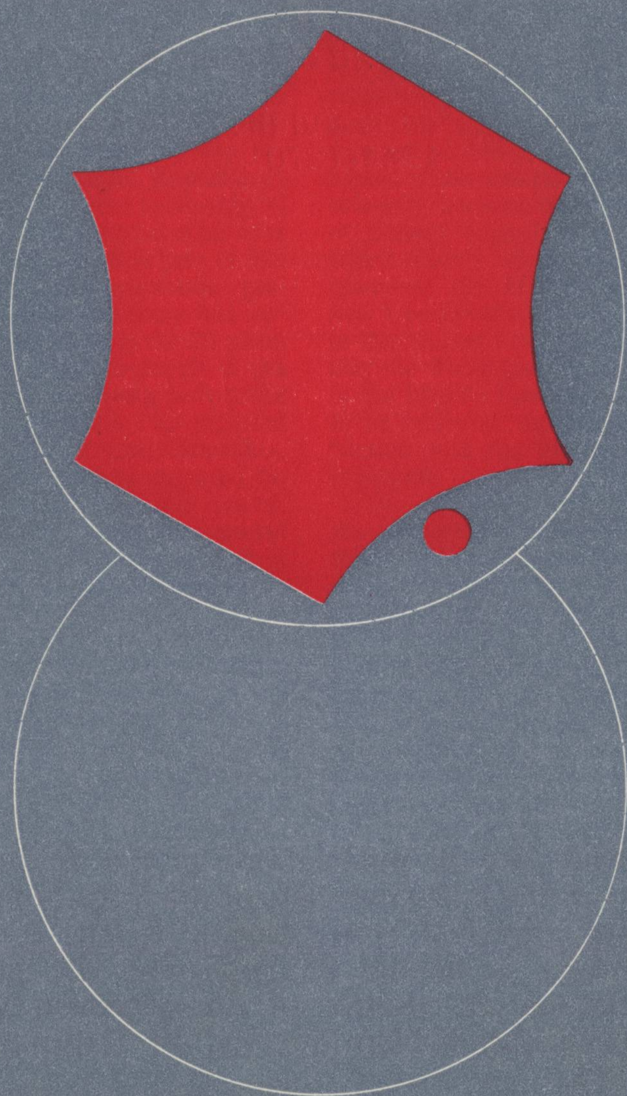
the new France: heirs on trial

James Bellini

6s

young fabian pamphlet 21

30p



young fabian pamphlet 21
the new France: heirs on trial

contents

1	the radical electors	1
2	the economic fulcrum	23
3	foreign policy: the selective process	31
4	an observation on colonial technique	40
5	a word of history in conclusion	42
	crisis and the radical electors 1944-1970	44

this pamphlet, like all publications of the Fabian Society, represents not the collective view of the Society but only the view of the individual who prepared it. The responsibility of the Society is limited to approving the publications which it issues as worthy of consideration within the Labour movement. Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth Street, London SW1.

October, 1970 SBN 7163 2021 5

1. the radical electors

" In France there are a great many radical electors, a certain number of radical deputies and a very small number of radical ministers ; as for the heads of the civil service, they are all reactionaries. He who properly understands this has the key to our politics." (Alain, *Elements of radical doctrine*).

For the French '68 was a bad year. The non-events of May, as they were to become, were trial enough ; more uncomfortable by far, however, was the discovery that the Federal Republic of Germany had usurped the leadership of western Europe. The financial crisis over the deutschmark revaluation later in that year symbolised the economic pre-eminence that West Germany had engendered for itself during the 20 years of its existence. As if to touch in the detail on this new European picture the countries of the Warsaw Pact initiated a military invasion of Czechoslovakia, and the French themselves prepared for an extended period of inner repair. "*Aprés de Gaulle,*" with the general himself still at the Elysée Palace, had begun. The new de Gaulle was to be Willy Brandt.

The disturbances of May 1968, which involved the whole spectrum of the French political system, though it was the extremist groups of the left that stole the glamour, were an indication, a symptom, of the French decline, rather than a cause of it. The most that can be said of the May and June events, remembering that they were only the culmination of many months agitation, is that their study could lead to a series of analytical conclusions about the state of internal politics in France.

Two things will, hopefully, emerge from this pamphlet. First, the régime of the fifth republic has stood French history on its head and stimulated a return to state power. Second, in part as a consequence of developments in Europe, and as a result of the departure of de Gaulle, French foreign policy has moved into a more deliberately calculating expansionist phase beyond Europe. Both of these developments are of vital interest within the context of British foreign (and to a lesser extent domestic) policy ; firstly because it raises the whole question of the kind of judgments involved in a closer commitment to western Europe, since this turns very much on the structure and philosophy of national governments, within the European sphere, and secondly because the most active area of French expansion is also an area which closely affects British long term planning, the Mediterranean. With a new Conservative government in office in the United Kingdom that has stated that the whole content of British policy in the Middle East and beyond Suez is to be reviewed, the prospect of greater friction with the French is immensely increased.

An important point which emerges when examining some characteristics of recent French history is that the roots of Gaullism run very deep in that history and in the very nature of French politics, and that the general's personal leadership of the Gaullist movement was, in fact, a moderating, rather than an exacerbatory, factor. In addition, the resignation of de Gaulle coincides with an air of growing crisis in the field of European integration. Paradoxically, the next few years are likely to see a defeat for the integrationists and a return to a more fluid state of affairs in western Europe. It may be possible, too, to make some calculated deductions as to the likely course of political development at the factional level within France.

Difficulty, however, springs from the problem of criteria. In judging the record of the first ten years of the fifth republic, do we employ the yardsticks

of the third and fourth, or do we abandon the patterns of the past and seek the unique elements in de Gaulle's republic?

We must recognise that the Gaullist republic has become one of left (consistently in disarray) against majority group. This raises the temptation of producing the orthodox analysis which has become the irritating habit of all modern journalistic political commentary, that of right and left, conversatism and reform, order and change and so forth. This will take us nowhere in the fifth republic. It is partly because this simple stratification has disappeared in the train of Gaullist politics (which have confused nationalism-and jingoism, reaction, revolution and philosophical radicalism) that a certain esoteric excitement has gathered following the revival of the Radical Party. Some have hoped to find in the experiment of Servan-Schreiber in resurrecting this ancient institution, a new (almost apolitical) party falling across the centre of the political spectrum but moving onto a completely new " revolutionary " plane. This hope flows from the conviction that Gaullism itself does not neatly toe the traditional line of party politics, but has been an attempt at lifting French politics onto an abstractly different level. Hence, for this small band of commentators, the Radical Party must substitute itself in that role, through employing a completely independent policy structure.

The main body of political opinion, however, has preferred to regard the new radical group as a return to the old centre, and the acting out of a time honoured French tradition, the pitting of the centre against the extremes. It happened in the earlier crisis years of the old republic, under MM. Queville Bidault, Pleven and others, and Frenchmen inured to confirmed habits see a new *centrist* revival as the antidote to a resurgent and united left and a weakened (because post-de Gaulle) Gaullist force. These are two alternative viewpoints, and show only that in France, at least, the future is a bewildering range of possibilities. All that is feasible is to present the facts and hazard opinion. The " resurgent and united left " has not, as yet, appeared, and as the dismissal of Garaudy from the Communist Party is followed by the defection of an even more prestigous member, M. Tillon (who even served as a communist minister in de Gaulle's provisional government in 1945) and the forces behind Mitterrand squabble with the Socialist Party and the remainder of the non-communist left over the tactics of opposition, the prospect of such unity is very sad indeed. This, too, conforms to tradition.

the struggle for the state

The coming months will see many attempts to assess the contribution of Gaullism or of de Gaulle, which are, to begin with, two distinct phenomena, to French political history. The one important observation that should be made, however, is that the political forces released by de Gaulle have added greater confusion to the most persistent problem bequeathed by the revolution of 1789, the power and position of the state.

British political experience can learn from this particular French dilemma only by a process of extrapolation on its own growth, by seeing, that is, the alternatives that the English political system faced in the 17th and 18th centuries and by drawing from this exercise certain conclusions that can be proffered, though gingerly, to the French commentator. The British "solved" the problem of state power largely by agree-

ing that its power was a concept capable of limitation, capable of being harnessed within a parliamentary system, and in all this, as every good reader of Bagehot should know, "the use of the queen, in a dignified capacity, is incalculable." To borrow from Bagehot once more, the secret of stability in England, for better or for worse, is the decision "to be governed in a way you understand."

In France, the issue has been, since the revolution, "Napoleon or the Assemblies" and the choice of France has so often been "the one man we can imagine, and not by the many people we cannot imagine." The parliamentary republics, in other words, punctuated the régimes of the Napoleons and the de Gaulles.

But de Gaulle was preceded by decades of third republic government, boring and uninspired yet relevant enough to overcome world war, scandal and riot over a period of 70 years. At a glance, then, the conclusion one reaches about French developments since 18 June 1940, which is the starting point for the existence of de Gaulle as a man of history, is that the general placed, once again, the whole question of the structure and role of the state in dispute.

Not only, the argument should run, did he reintroduce the conflict after 1940, and in a more direct way after the liberation of France in 1944, but also returned continually to the issue during his years in political limbo after 1946. Repeatedly, he challenged the basic legitimacy of the state represented by the fourth republic, and just as insistently offered himself as the legal and political alternative. It was this process of "confrontation" with the fourth republic, de Gaulle's rejection of the right (and, just as much, the competency) of the politicians of the 1946 republic to rule France and his own refusal to work within the confines of the 1946 constitution, that helped create the set of circumstances which led to his return to power in 1958. In other words, he had preserved, by all this, his ability to impose conditions, to reshape the whole structure of the constitution, to change the direction of French politics.

The return of de Gaulle in 1958 symbolised the persistence of the quarrel over the nature of the state. Just as important, therefore, his retirement calls for a reassessment of the condition of France.

The argument that de Gaulle resurrected the seemingly secondary question of constitutional relationships and political power, rests on strong evidence. It is important, however, to emphasise that he was assisted in this task by certain trends in France of which he was not the personal instigator, which were not linked to Gaullist ideals or to de Gaulle's own ambitions, yet which coincided with, and in some respects magnified, the special aspects of de Gaulle's methodology which were, after his assumption of power in 1958, to increase the potency of the centralised state. First, the governments of the fourth republic attempted to rebuild the shattered power of France. The republic sprang from a unique political situation: a defeated power, yet a victor with an inherent and flagrant conflict over state loyalties, manifested in the antagonism between collaborators and the resistance, between Gaullist "legitimists" and anti-de Gaulle parliamentarians, between communists and non-communists. There were splits, laterally and vertically, on all conceivable bases of disagreement.

The defeat of 1940 was, more than all else, a result of the political, economic and military decay that had overtaken the French since 1918. Consequently,

the main thrust of this policy of revival was seen in the marked change in economic policy that became apparent after liberation. Beginning on 13 December 1944 the provisional government of de Gaulle initiated a programme of extensive nationalisation. The *Banque de France* and the principal commercial banks were brought under the control of the government; major insurance companies were nationalised. Today over 50 per cent of insurance business in France is conducted by nationalised organisations. Coal, electricity and gas were taken over, and *Air France* and the Renault automobile complex (in 1945 a very small company) were added to the railway network that had been nationalised before the war. This programme was to be far more ambitious than, for example, that of Great Britain which, even with a Labour government in power, was not to bring insurance, banking or the motor industry within the ambit of the state. Moreover, in France the process begun under de Gaulle was to be adopted and strengthened under the early governments of the young fourth republic.

With the planning of Jean Monnet the country embarked on one of the most ambitious, and one of the most successful, investment planning experiments to be attempted in a non-collectivist state. Yet, in part this centralising zeal, with faint echoes of Colbert, was not to persist into the late 'forties. De Gaulle and his protégés had provided much of the original impetus, and the strong popular support for communist and socialist parties in the early post-war period made such policies both simple to implement and more necessary in general political terms. By 1947, however, the general was a private citizen, the communists, by far the strongest party in the country, had been thrown out of the government, and the socialist party, the SFIO, was embarking on its slow journey of decline from a position of importance to the level of impotence it achieved by the early 1950's. There was no further nationalisation after 1948, and later governments, as the spectrum of power shifted across the political centre to the centre right after 1949, introduced their own versions of the *dirigisme* that had meant central planning and public control at the beginning.

There was, then, a brief honeymoon for centralism of the de Gaulle variety, and modifications of it were to appear from time to time through the years of the fourth republic. The variety of emphasis on the state's role was the product of differing philosophies. But for General de Gaulle the meaning of his administrative reforms was perfectly clear: "It is to the *state* that it falls to build the nation's power, which, henceforth, depends on the economy. The latter must be diverted, all the more so because it is deficient, because it needs to renew itself, and because it will not do so unless prevailed upon. Such, in my view, is the principal motive for the measures of nationalisation, control and modernisation taken by my government" (de Gaulle, *Memoires de guerre*). This singular preoccupation with the power and privilege of the state, however, was not to be emulated by others, apart from de Gaulle's own disciples. To the more practical adherents of the *Mouvement Républicain Populaire*, which was to assume much of the burden of government after de Gaulle's departure early in 1946, the problem was the same, that of reinvigorating France, but the style and philosophy was different, apart from Georges Bidault, who never fully recovered from being a protégé of de Gaulle, and who destroyed himself eventually by backing the right wing extremists during the Algerian crisis of 1958.

Apart from one or two Gaullists in the group, the MRP did not rely on constant reiterations of the dignity of the state, the glory of France, that had punctuated de Gaulle's speeches. Yet, and this is the important point, the fourth republic did not, as the fifth republic hopes to do, kill the issue of the role of the state. In many ways the mundane life style of the fourth republic governments merely disguised a continuing, though slow and erratic, trend of centralisation. De Gaulle's style was missing, but the disarray within the party system remained an open invitation to either stagnation or individual initiative. The *immobilisme* into which the old republic sank for long periods made it possible for the opinionated Vincent Auriol, as president of the republic, to do far more than "chase hares." Contrary to the vague notion of a constitutional president arbitrating above the squabbling of parties, Vincent Auriol made periodic sorties into the political arena and, paradoxically, sowed the seeds of the notion of strong presidential power that was to be institutionalised under de Gaulle. Auriol, a leading socialist, had often attacked the idea of a president, yet had been forced, by the total inadequacy of a party régime to act and thereby help increase the bankruptcy of the assemblies. The irrelevance of the assembles to the formulation of foreign policy, and, to a lesser extent, the programming of economic planning decisions, was consistently exhibited under the fourth republic. In foreign affairs the point was perfectly illustrated, for up until 1954 the conduct of foreign policy was monopolised by the MRP. The party controlled the *Quai D'Orsay* through its own foreign minister, apart from a flying visit from the socialist Blum in 1946, until the radical Mendès-France took it away in the middle of 1954. After the London agreements were signed in June 1948, agreements seriously changing the state of relations in Europe, the foreign minister, Georges Bidault was howled down in the national assembly, and was saved only by the support of an ambivalent socialist group that was finding foreign policy too difficult a subject. The assembly was infuriated most by the total lack of consultalion in foreign affairs, and this grievance persisted under his MRP successor, Robert Schuman. Leading members of the assembly questioned foreign minister Schuman about his failure to keep the deputies, or even the committee on foreign affairs, informed, in particular, in 1950, about his coal and steel community project. Schuman's reply was instructive, though self contradictory: "I respect the separation of executive and legislative. It is not I who demand a strong executive. But I will not allow negotiations to be directed by an assembly."

He was, in fact, both using the constitutional vocabulary of de Gaulle, and relying on its implications, while earnestly denying the fact. It was indicative, in this context, of the gulf that was emerging between a governmental machine that was centralising itself, and the French public. It was this estrangement that Mendès-France, for all his other faults, attempted to remedy during his term in office in 1954. Yet even he, in some ways an aberration on the political scene, could not escape the undercurrent of pale chauvinism, later jingoism, that made of the fourth and fifth republics a vague unity. It should be remembered that this same Mendès-France consistently opposed the Rome treaty that many now see as the work of a Europeanist France. Mendès-France refused to see France bound by the wording of "mere treaties." In the end, overtaken by the colonial crisis that was to destroy the fourth republic, it was to de Gaulle that France turned, and it was with this man that the gulf

between state and country was deepened and consolidated.

De Gaulle had both the charisma and, eventually, the legal apparatus to introduce an era of highly centralised personal government, building on the latent trends that had shown themselves briefly and at intervals under the old régime, and lacked only the personification that de Gaulle, the only possible candidate, himself refused. He now introduced a system that could pass, in turn, for presidential, monarchical or simply autocratic. He also possessed sufficient political capital to enforce the only Algerian policy that would succeed. For Georges Bidault, the old hand of the fourth republic, the General "had the secret of the king;" the difference this time, however, was that the king ignored his friends.

Yet, aided by a constitutional framework attuned to his own personal touch (and drafted by a man who will, eventually, be recognised as the most Gaullist of all French politicians, above de Gaulle himself, Michel Debré, now minister of defence) the new president of the republic assumed. it was to seem, the power of the France of January 1946. He was to lead his republic to a second explosion, ten years exactly after the insurrection of May 1958 that had primed his return to power. Significantly, the demonstrations of 1968 were the product of precisely that conflict that de Gaulle had intensified and attempted to solve by the strengthening of his own personal rule to the detriment of the parties, the conflict, that is, between the claims of the state and the latent "*incivisme*" of the mass of radical electors (even through students) to which Alain referred. The real issue activating the sociology students of Paris in the early months of 1968 was the overweening paternalism of the bureaucratic administrative machine.

There were issues enough for the students, had they sought them (for the general was not about to provide them). In the most immediate field, that of education, the undergraduates were confronted with an abysmal record. The history of French education since 1945 had been one largely of non-reform: of the rejection of the Langevin-Wallon plan of the 1940's, of the defeat of the Berthoin project in 1955 and the Billères scheme of 1956 (all abortive plans for reforming education). After 1958 the fifth republic began to feel the pressures of the post-war population explosion, with the result that the government was faced with a serious resource problem. The earlier planning that could have prevented an accumulation of educational blockages had not materialised, and Paris was obliged to pour cash into the schools and universities in an attempt to head off trouble. In 1952 national expenditure on education had stood at 2,209 million francs; at the end of the fourth republic in 1958 it had reached only 4,850 million francs. By 1968 the figure had become over 21,000 milion francs and is still rising, as the administration reacts to pressures from within the universities and, to be fair, to a more adventurous train of thought within the government. The years 1958 to 1966 were filled with attempts to modernise the educational system, but the product was May 1968 and its preceding period of unrest. When, as the government tried to restore its credibility, the higher education act came through the assemblies, the act itself pointed to "the imperial education system (which) applied a centralising concept" and the sickening concept of "autonomy and participation." Looking back on the episode from the standpoint of the new troubles at Nanterre early in 1970, one wonders whether the trick has worked, or whether the students are going to realise that the government has pro-

duced only reorganisation in place of the massive reforms and expansion programmes that many of them looked for. Above all this, however, the students made their mark on a régime. It was no coincidence that the régime was that of de Gaulle.

May 1968: Gaullism takes over

The students failed, if what they pushed for was a victory " for the imagination," for under Chaban-Delmas and the pontifical eye of Georges Pompidou, the new society stage one has cultivated, it seems, the vacuous quality that seeped into the last few years of de Gaulle's rule, this time adding to it a taste for the politically exotic as emissaries slip away from Paris to Madrid, Lisbon, and to various parts of North Africa where democratic method is equally sparse, and as Mr. Vorster is received with ceremony by the hierarchy of the French state. The French government, that has been providing the South African government with helicopters and submarines for some time, has again enjoyed the fruits of its knack of playing both sides at once. In contrast to the massive (even though justified) attacks launched against the Conservative reappraisal of South African arms policy, African states treated the French with a velvet glove. At the OAU conference in Addis Ababa in August, the African delegates expressed a delirious approval of a French offer to do nothing more than " re-examine " its South African policy.

The students lacked theory ; indeed they presided over the death of revolutionary theory, substituting enthusiasm for discipline and finally falling prey to the habit of the French left of being incapable of uniting. In 1968 the unions, the communist party, the radical students, Roman Catholic and Maoist alike, seemed to have inherited the weaknesses that plagued the SFIO, the communists and the other groups of reform in the earliest years of the fourth republic and which, then, invited the ascendancy of governments of the centre right in which socialists played a negligible part, and from which communists, after 1947, were totally excluded, regardless of their electoral strength. Despite their theoretical disorder, the students of this newest of lefts knew, at least, that the struggle was not between class and class but between state and individual. The battle was against Colbert and Louis XIV, against the empire of Napoleon III, despite its elegance, against, in fact, the very " brilliance " and " grandeur " of France that to the general was the basis of France's claim to her unacknowledged pre-eminence in the world. Yet, after the riots of Spring 1958, the *ancien regime* was to survive, though mutilated and exposed ; the lesson of the piece, *la Victoire de la France,* was to be rammed home by the president of the republic ; " we know all too well to what new bankruptcy, irreperable this time, the role of the parties would lead our country." " Gaullism . . . is but the contemporary form of our country's impetus " (de Gaulle at a press conference on 9 September 1968).

As a statement of Gaullism these two observations could stand alone, in sufficiency. The theme is quite clear: Gaullism is the doctrine of the state, of the immense transcendance of French historical existence. Since that existence has persisted beyond the trials of revolution and of military defeat, it treats with disdain the claims of mere passing ideology: " it is too late for any ideology, and in particular communism, to prevail over national feeling " (ibid).

This particular analysis is crucially important if the historical significance

of de Gaulle is to be appreciated. Since Gaullism had drawn upon, and extended, the reasoning of de Gaulle, and since elements of that political trait have influenced the formulation of both foreign and domestic policy under both fourth and fifth republics (for the *rassemblement du peuple francais* flourished for several years after 1947, bringing pressure to bear on the government, especially in the area of foreign policy) and since Gaullism remains a potent form in France now, the impact of the person of de Gaulle on post-war French history is almost total. The new factor is the absence of de Gaulle himself. The difficulty has always been that of seeing Gaullism as a facet of de Gaulle's political power ; in fact it is the reverse, as de Gaulle himself has often made clear. Gaullism is a version, he says, of the impetus, the spiritual energy of the country at a particular moment in time, and de Gaulle has been " privileged " to accomplish and clarify its mission. It is essential to grasp the nature of de Gaulle's obsession with his own right to spell out the Gaullist message if one is to fathom out the disinterested manner in which he dispensed " the truth." His own political legitimacy, as he so often said, stemmed from his aid to France in crisis: " no system of thought, will or action could inspire France as is necessary in order to be France, except the one to which events have given rise since June 1940."

" This enterprise, although known as Gaullism since 1940, is but the contemporary form of our country's impetus, once again revived, to achieve a lustre, power and influence in keeping with its human vocation among men " (ibid).

This was a legitimist argument, on which he relied constantly during his period out of power, that was to become, to many abroad, at best increasingly irritating and, at the saddest, incredibly boring. Yet it had retained sufficient of its magic to activate the dull hordes of middle class taxpayers that thronged the Champs Elysées in arid support of the republic in the Summer of 1968. Nevertheless, the whole episode had hastened the final decline of de Gaulle and, more relevant, had added strength to Gaullism. This might seem an inconsistent argument, but it is necessary to explain it, if an insight into the working of Pompidou's France is to be gained.

The theory and practice of Gaullism is linked, not to General de Gaulle, but to an analysis of the essence of French being. The most powerful feature of its philosophy, therefore, is that it draws strength from the whole of that being: it claims 1789 as its own, it lauds the republican cause, yet relies on the notion of the leader, and clearly General de Gaulle has fitted this role, and hence accommodates the Bonapartist, imperial and monarchic traditions that competed throughout the 19th century. Gaullism, in a sense, obviates the political volatility characteristic of post-revolutionary France, and herein lies its greatest strength. An important observation to make, however, having said that any stability that has been enjoyed by the fifth republic is based on the apparent conquest of historical uncertainty, is that the republic of 1958 was more the republic of de Gaulle than of Gaullism. Paradoxical as it seems, it is a logical extension of the argument that the person of de Gaulle is quite separate from the on going nature of Gaullism. Under de Gaulle the republic was moderated and controlled because de Gaulle was firmly in control ; the Gaullism of a France without de Gaulle, a Gaullism now attempting to consolidate its position, is, and will be, a far more calculating and more dangerous animal.

There are two good reasons for defending this particular argument. On the one hand the constitution of the fifth republic was tailored to the general's own requirements, and this will prove to be its greatest weakness, since it depends largely on the personality of the man who holds the office. From the special powers provision of article 16 which allows (and has, in fact, allowed) for total intervention by the president of the republic in the political affairs of the country, for a suspension, that is, of the constitution and the imposition of totalitarian rule (though technically for only a short time), to the careful separation of executive from legislature, the Debré constitution of 1958 offered the alternative of a prime ministerial régime of considerable vulnerability. But in choosing the Elysée rather than the Hotel Matignon, in opting for the presidency, de Gaulle struck out on the path to a semi-presidential system, pursuing the stability of the British parliamentary structure (though relying on the notion of full separation of cabinet and parliament, rather than on our conventional practices of tight party discipline and collective responsibility) and the massive centralised power of the United States presidency. Gradually, through the constitutional reform of November 1962 (which established direct, popular elections to the presidency) and because of the personal strength of de Gaulle, the French system went the way of strong centralised power, acting through executive delegates. De Gaulle's stay in office can never be described as 'cabinet government.' The cabinet, at all times, appeared to act by license from the president, and de Gaulle's normal practice of choosing technocratic placemen (such as Couve de Murville), rather than party politicians, facilitated this.

On the other hand, and as a corollary to this, the chief characteristic of de Gaulle's style was his disregard for party machinations. As a man of arms more than as a figure of politics, de Gaulle never underwent the apprenticeship of party work. As an avowed disciple of the philosopher Bergson, the general allowed the instinctive side of his nature to triumph over the intellectual ; argument, as a result, seemed an empty exercise and the political party epitomised, for him, empty argument. During the war, and during the brief period of provisional government, he made it abundantly clear that he saw no value in *"le systeme,"* the factional dogfight that plagued the last days of the third republic and, most important, reduced France to defeat. He was determined to replace that system ; in the event he was forced to wait until 1958 until he could try a second time, for his attitudes in 1945 produced nothing but enmity in the parties that emerged after the war. Those parties re-established the machinery, though with several important changes, of the old republic, and by 1949 the administration of Dr. Queville had revived the habits and methods of the pre-war system. De Gaulle had abandoned power in January 1946, and during his twelve years of private life his experience of Gaullist party politics must have served to confirm his thoroughly entrenched misgivings about the value of party. The *rassemblement du people francais,* a party which mushroomed after April 1947 in personal response to the call of de Gaulle at Strasbourg, was, through the writings of Debré, Palewski (and, very briefly, intellectual polymaths such as Aron) and through the open thuggishness which became a visible feature of Gaullist rallies, to develop Gaullism far beyond the vaguer premonitions of de Gaulle himself. He was, in fact, outflanked, and his image distorted by the doctrinaires who professed to speak in his name. The RPF started as a party of *valeur* and salvation, and rapidly became an anti-communist bastion on the

right. It was, nevertheless, the ambiguity and incompleteness of de Gaulle's own political direction that produced a movement open to following the leadership of the most vociferous or most extreme of its number.

This vagueness was a defect in the general's style in 1947, and remained to influence the development of his following after his assumption of power in 1958. In this second post-1958 chapter of the Gaullist story, however, there was to be a significant difference. The nature of de Gaulle's grip on power after 1958 made of his physical presence in control a moderating factor over the mass of his supporters. The threat of a movement towards greater doctrinaire extremism, in the name of orthodoxy, remains as an alternative for the years following his departure.

The function of de Gaulle as a moderating influence stems from two related factors: the ambiguous nature of his approach to politics, and the obstacles placed in the path of organised political pressure by the fifth republic's constitution itself. The negative aspect of de Gaulle's method is partly the result of a marked inability on his part to handle detail (exacerbated by rapidly failing sight in the last years of his presidency) and from an almost legendary preference for the grand gesture, the philosophical stand. This was magnified in the field of foreign policy by a hazily formed conviction that France benefitted most, if the world of states was reduced to the lowest conceivable depths of confusion, both about his own motives and about the possible alignments of the future, that France was strongest, that is, in situations of international fluidity. Such negativity produced relative inaction at the domestic level and diplomatic irritation at the international level. In foreign policy the affirmative lost out repeatedly to the *non*. In domestic policy such was the level of unconcern with political minutae that the outbursts of 1968 were rooted in the philosophical rather than in the particular. De Gaulle had provided the students with many grievances, but with no *issues*, such was the anaemia of his rule. Each group therefore manufactured its own, the students their demands for social and educational reform and for philosophical radicalism, the factory workers their wages, and in this found the source of their disunity. Pursuing separate ends they saw no need for cohesion. But that the infuriated president of the republic could seek to rely in his appeals on the meaningless benality of "participation" for interim salvation was testimony to the moribund state of the French body politic. To complement this low profile technique at the domestic level, the separation of state apparatus and parliamentary machine, together with the personal grip on power enjoyed by de Gaulle through a constitution constructed for his own brand of government, magnified the implications of the new distribution of party power after 1958.

Gaullism clears the decks

The most notable result of the return to power of General de Gaulle was the massacre of the French communist party in the first elections of the fifth republic in November 1958. Because of the new electoral procedures, involving a second ballot (where the leaders on the first ballot fought it out for the seats and in which the preference invariably went against the communist candidate), and because of the bedazzlement of the electorate by the promise of de Gaulle's régime, the representation of the communist party in the national assembly fell to a mere ten seats. In 1956 it had stood at 145 seats. The communist vote, it is true, had plummetted from 5.5 million in 1956 to 3,900,000 in 1958,

but only electoral surgery could transpose this to a reduction in parliamentary strength from 145 to ten (figures for Metropolitan France only). The massive support for de Gaulle in the referendum earlier in the year, the result had been a huge 80 per cent YES to his programme, had undoubtedly indicated the direction of prevailing political winds, and large numbers of voters abandoned the parties of the left to rally behind the newly formed union for the new republic. The socialist party, too, saw its parliamentary strength halved to 40 seats, such was the ability of the new Gaullist movements to appeal to the moderate voters around the centre. As a consequence, the centre party, the MRP, lost ground too.

The turnaround was stark. From a parliamentary system dominated by the left, the French electorate produced a mirror image on the right. Retrospective analysis shows, however, true to the French tradition, that this dramatic change was closely linked to the sense of crisis prevailing in 1958. There was a rallying to the personal intervention of de Gaulle and a return to the candidates of the safe, conservative right. If this represented the measure of disillusion with the old republic, however, it did not meet exactly the desires of de Gaulle. He had, all through the process of rebuilding his power, sought to avoid too powerful a parliamentary accomplice. The accomplice, he recognised, could quickly become a rival, and a doctrinaire rival at that. De Gaulle's decision to rely on the single member constituency with a second ballot was based partly on the hope that a degree of the previous factionalism would be reproduced, limiting the cohesion of parliamentary fronts, especially those of the right, and hence maximising his own freedom. In the event, the *penchant* of the French public for the dramatic political gesture, as Alain warns us, proved the stronger ; the parties of the centre and of the left were made to share the blame for the chaos that had overtaken that system, and the new president (he was elected in December, under the method he was later to abolish) was faced with the prospect of dealing with a vociferous parliamentary majority. It soon became evident that de Gaulle was to rely upon the office of prime minister to circumvent the demands of the new assembly. It was henchman Debré who assumed the unenviable task of protecting the policies of a leader who was still in the throes of perfecting them.

In the elections that were to punctuate the first ten years of de Gaulle's republic the non-Gaullist parties were to recover ground, but the marriage between Gaullism and crisis was to endure, bringing near disaster to the left in the ballot of June 1968 that followed in the wake of the student riots. In the elections of November 1962 the parties of the left had recovered a little ; the communists increased their national assembly foothold from ten places to 41, and the SFIO increased in strength from 40 to 67. But the majority of the UNR/UDT/independent republicans was preserved and strengthened, increasing over 1958 and providing the first real parliamentary majority ever to exist in France. This signified at least two things: the pull of Gaullism, or of de Gaulle (we shall know only as Pompidou meets his electoral challenges) was proving increasingly attractive, and the traditional parties were threatened with considerable, possibly permanent, decline. Both facts seemed to substantiate de Gaulle's claim that he represented the ongoing (and returning) spirit of "the real France." Parliament, it seemed, had been cured of its petty weaknesses, and Frenchmen were growing to like the taste of centralised leadership.

It seemed, in other words, that France was beginning to move the way of the American presidential system, even though the one uncertain feature remained the lack of a guaranteed parliamentary stability. The American constitution had evolved around strong, organised parties ; nothing could prevent the habits of the third and fourth republics returning to France, except (and this is important) the separation of executive and legislature that de Gaulle had seen written into his own constitution in 1958. Even then, parliamentary stability appeared to be increasing, suggesting that political eyes were straying away from the Palais Bourbon and beginning to look upon the office of president as the emerging residence of power.

Nothing acted to illustrate this better than the presidential election campaign during 1965. The most significant event in that campaign was clearly the (abortive) candidature of Gaston Defferre, a politician of considerable standing in his own locality of Marseilles with an attractive record of positive policies. The Defferre challenge was significant in a number of ways: it was based on a co-operation of the non-communist groups on the left, always an unpredictable combination in France ; it represented, too, a confrontation with de Gaulle on his own rules. It was a challenge, in other words, for the presidency not, as the communist party had long insisted, for the assembly where the " people " wielded the power.

It was, no matter what the outcome, the baptism by the parties of the presidential system *à la France*. From now on the rules of power were recognised, and even though the Defferre candidature was, almost inevitably, to fall foul of division on the left (he was to retire before the presidential election, partly as a result of the lack of solid support from the communists) the notion of a political presidency had been instilled into the French electoral consciousness.

De Gaulle, then, had won his first point. France was to have proper, grown up presidents, even though the general was considerably affronted when competition for his crown appeared. Yet the campaign of 1965 also made apparent the impracticality of his ideals, for the essence of his presidency had been the transcendent quality of his rule, his function as " prime mediator on behalf of the nation." Now, the resurgence of the socialists behind Defferre, and the general electoral melée that surrounded the elections of 1965, most of all, the politicisation of the candidatures that did remain to compete with de Gaulle, some (like Lecanuet and Mitterrand) with an unexpected degree of success, showed just how political an office the presidency had become. The general might have managed to retain the national character of the office ; his successors would find it increasingly difficult. Those elections also proved, much to de Gaulle's annoyance, that his status was rooted much more firmly than he would prefer in the despicable electoral process. Not only did he need to go to a second ballot to secure the necessary majority in 1965, he also realised that the stronger the incumbent, at this time he himself, the more united would be the rival groups that sought to overthrow him. On the second ballot the practice developed of groups on the extreme right siding with those on the left. Despite the comforting conclusion that polarised coalitions were more likely (if they developed as conventional practice) to ease the election of future presidents, de Gaulle could hardly have taken pleasure in the fact that many political analysts chose to credit his eventual victory to the voting loyalty of the elderly and of women. Nevertheless, the overall lesson was clear. The French,

borrowing much from the American experience (with television, badges and even "favourite sons") had absorbed the idea of the president and had liked it. What they had not perfected, as yet, was the idea of a national president with a degree of political colour. They were half-way there; the defeated candidates of greatest standing, Mitterrand and Lecanuet, were moderates possessing, moreover, two useful qualities denied de Gaulle: a sense of their own limitations, and a respect for the methods of representative politics. It was de Gaulle's lack of such qualifications that was, even in 1965, contributing to a gathering cynicism which was to sink rapidly to the level of personal ridicule.

Thus, in selling the presidency, the campaign of 1965 accentuated the trend towards political centralism. The top heavy centralism of Louis XIV had been feudal; the story since liberation had been one of modernising an essentially primitive parliamentary system. On that primitive system de Gaulle had attempted, in 1944, to impose a régime of central leadership. During the fourth republic a string of governments, some lasting only hours, had balanced precariously on the coalitions of a fragmented assembly, yet seeking all the time to harness the administrative power of a vaguely defined state. After 1958 the personal power of de Gaulle combined with a centralising constitution to attempt a restructuring of the French political system in order to produce a popular national leader and strong balanced parties. Article 16 gave the president special residual powers; under articles 54 and 61 the president is given the task of protecting the constitution; the president has the power, like the British prime minister, to dissolve parliament, and appoints the prime minister, which in France is a *political* act. There is a definite choice, as compared to the comparatively limited powers of the British sovereign, who must respect parliamentary realities. De Gaulle chose Debré, Pompidou, Couve de Murville, but could have gone elsewhere. The president promulgates bills and appoints to the higher civil service and administrative posts. He can also, under article 11, appeal direct to the electorate for their approval by referendum of certain major decisions (such as treaties or community agreements) affecting the actual operation of the constitution. The president is, since 1962, directly elected. All this, while a reflection of a strong desire to see the political future of France guaranteed a greater level of stability and executive certainty, is also a product of a particular philosophy of the state. But, whatever the misgivings, if the attempt succeeds, the verdict on de Gaulle will be far kinder than that on France.

There are, therefore, opposing by products of de Gaulle's republic: on the one side the state centralism that can only threaten to produce an over-simplified, and therefore autocratic, state machine, and on the other the centralisation necessary to produce *national* parties, from groups hitherto formed of parochial deputies, and an awareness of a national political unity that at all times must be made to function. This latter was noticeable in the run up to the general election of 1967. The Gaullists, in that election, had many headaches, chief among them being that it was the first national election, for them, that was free of any sense of impending crisis, and crisis, as all followers of the RPF in the late 'forties should know, is the staple diet of Gaullist campaigns. This factor, however, was neutralised by prime minister Pompidou through his efforts to rally the Gaullist and associated parties into a coherent force, and to centralise and strengthen the whole by assuming the leadership himself. It was prime

ministerial electioneering on the British pattern and seemed to provide the sense of direction previously lacking, quite apart from filling the position at the head of the Gaullist loyalists that de Gaulle himself had scrupulously avoided. Inevitably, such a coalescing of support behind Pompidou made it desirable for the parties of opposition to consolidate in order to compete.

Remnants of the old MRP and the conservative groups merged to form the democratic centre ; a federation of the democratic and socialist left lined up behind Mitterrand with an agreement in the bag which would eliminate obstruction by one candidate of a better placed left nominee in any run off ballots. In some areas the federation forged links with the democratic centre. This arrangement, however, was tactically weak for the centre, as the communist party was better organised at local level and could hope to overpower the loosely linked democratic centre. The 1967 results showed, for all the lack of critical issues, the strength of the trend towards polarisation within the system. The communist party took 72 seats (it had managed only ten in 1958), while the Gaullist candidates totted up 8.5 million votes on the first ballot, an improvement of over 1.5 million.

But all this is part of the history of Gaullism and of de Gaulle ; the period of *aprés de Gaulle,* which borrows so much from the first ten years of the fifth republic, starts in the Spring of 1968. Looking back on the crisis of mid-1968 one gains a certain insight into the quality of de Gaulle's technique that will forever compete with the positive side of his reign in the final judgment. We can forgive, at a pinch, the manipulation of the ORTF (the national broadcasting system). In the 1967 election campaign the majority group, the UNR/UDT/independent republicans, with 6 million voters, were given 90 minutes of valuable television time; the French Communist Party, with over 3 million supporters at the previous election, were given 27 minutes. De Gaulle had treated himself to an extra helping of TV time just before the 1965 presidential election. Prior to the general election of June 1968 he appeared, with a suitably helpful interviewer, both before and, more significantly, after the official television campaign had run its course, Bidault had always said that the general never forgot the power of the broadcasting media after his speeches to occupied France. And generals, no matter how old they become, never fail to recognise the value of good communications. It was up to his enemies to destroy them. But can we forgive the manner in which de Gaulle buttressed his own position in June of 1968 by appealing to the very elements which had sanctioned the empty policies of the first ten years of the fifth republic, the very same leaven of mediocrity that thronged the Champs Elysée in support of order on 30 May 1968? They seemed to be the same elements who would support a second Poujade. Many of them certinly appreciated the timely amnesty for the old-guard "ultras," Soustelle, Bidault, Salan (whatever de Gaulle's underlying motivation). Even the vision of a régime bolstered by the French troops on the Rhine, that had been blessed with a thinly veiled personal visit from de Gaulle mid-way through the troubles, must have held its attractions.

The wheel of opportunism, in fact, had turned full circle, even though in reverse. The general was again looking to crisis for his salvation, but in this case had no régime to accuse but his own. On the surface, at least, however, the concoction worked. The Gaullist candidates were returned, in June 1968, on the straitjacket tails of *la grande*

peur, with the largest popular majority in the short history of the fifth republic. The relevant aspect of the election results of 1968, and later events were to confirm this, was that an expanding sector of the French public had come to realise that it was voting for a post-de Gaulle régime. The events of May had shown, ironically, that the republic could survive *in spite*, not because, of its domineering president. The increased votes went to Gaullists, not to de Gaulle, and this realisation provides any speculative discussion of the new fifth republic with two central elements: the legacy of de Gaulle is both a wide based, and increasingly organised, Gaullist movement, and secondly there had been a popular rejection of the heady diet of "grandeur" that had become the sole grace of the general's politics. France "*aprés de Gaulle,*" we were told, would be one of introversion and domestic concern. It was a vote for safety.

It is clear, however, that such profound change in the balance of attitudes within France is likely to produce unexpected results. On the one hand, at the domestic level, a greater role for the political parties will either lead, in the best French tradition, to splits within those parties and hence a revival of the coalition system of the earlier republics, or will produce a struggle for orthodoxy within the Gaullist ranks and hence, true to the best political habits of the left, lead to greater dogmatism on questions of principle. The Stalinists of the Gaullist movement, the Debrés, perhaps the Chaban-Delmas' (who, though a moderate in comparison to Soustelle and Debré, was a central figure in the confusion preceding de Gaulle's capture of power in 1958, and was a leading light in the Gaullist RPF all those years ago) will resist the abandonment of ten years of foreign policy and domestic paternalism.

Even Maurice Schumann, the foreign minister, who is seen in this country as a Europeanist and a new ally for British marketeers, appears in a different light when one sees his name on the binding of a book entitled "*Honneur et Patrie,*" carrying a preface by General de Gaulle. Indeed, Schumann seems to grasp better than most the essentials of Gaullist thought, for even way back in late 1946, after de Gaulle's resignation it was Maurice Schumann who offered the best definition of the Gaullist spirit: "There is neither Bidault nor de Gaulle doctrine," he said, "there is a doctrine of France." (*L'Aube*, 12 July, 1946). Schumann was then a prominent member of the Roman Catholic MRP that was to take so much of the Europe building glory that the French were to monopolise, despite the contributions of Spaak, Stikker and the rest. That same Schumann must surely have felt the attraction of dual loyalties when the Gaullist rally was launched the following year. They are all, Schumann, Debré, Chaban-Delmas, men of de Gaulle, and their most predictable quality in that, like their Messiah, they grow more cantankerous with age.

This is the listing vessel that Pompidou, who is president first, Gaullist second, must pilot over the next six years. For the moment he will have the prospect of a divided left behind to aid him; the Garaudy affair and the need within the communist party hierarchy to make good the damage inflicted upon it during 1968 (with both its ambiguous stand during May and its equally equivocal reaction to the Czechoslovak crisis to its credit) appear at the moment to reduce to zero the possibility of a massive assault from the left at the general elections of 1973. Even so, the first overtures for collaboration have been made, and the threat of a left-backed presidential candidate in 1976 is very great indeed. If the 1973 results seri-

ously affect the grip of Pompidou and his government or their power, by producing disaffection within the majority or a resounding comeback for the opposition, 1976 should be an interesting year. A second, and stronger, possibility is that the traditional, 19th century pattern of a reversal of parliamentary majorities will re-establish itself, but with the swing being not from right to left (it used to be the opposite under the third republic) but from centre and right, where it now rests, to a new radical alternative.

The first ten years of the fifth republic produced an awareness of the presidential device as an office linked to, but not reliant on, a parliamentary system. This republic has borrowed heavily from the United States in order to develop this ' semi-presidential régime ' (as the French call it) and has, increasingly, accepted the concept of presidential power. The decade of de Gaulle's rule left this mark at least, and Georges Pompidou is working to entrench the habit. But the recent by election at Nancy has thrown up an alternative for future change, and the governing axiom in French politics is to make good allowance for the radical innovation.

The Nancy election is significant for a number of conflicting reasons. Clearly, the most compelling is the candidature of Jean Jacques Servan-Schreiber who, through his journalistic adventure " *Le défi américain,*" put forward his version of a post-de Gaulle " new politics." Whatever de Gaulle was during his 30 years at the front of the political stage, he was always a man of yesterday (even over Algeria, independence was only a final alternative); he happened to be present at those times when the appeals of yesterday's glories assumed new proportions. And, despite the efforts of Pompidou's new government (though clearly of the *ancien regime*) to sell the new society of Chaban, the reliance on a collection of domestic policies of immensely vague proportions leaves that government ill prepared for any challenge, no matter how maverick, resting on a positive newness. It is Servan-Schreiber's hope that his newly purchased toy, the emaciated radical party (the party that had formed the backbone of the third republic and has struggled for survival since 1955, which he recently equipped with a spanking new 1960's manifesto, which leaves it, ten years behind the times, a front-runner in France) can provide that challenge and become the vehicle for his own, Kennedy style attack on the presidency in the elections of 1976.

This new manifesto, resting on the principle of " revolution through reform," a political contortion that provides countless permutations for the French analyst, steals freely from the vocabulary of the marxist left and the Gaullist right. It is an attempt to move onto a new technocratic plateau in an effort to attract from every disillusioned or discontented quarter of the political spectrum. The communist party, however, appears to have identified the exercise as a simple resurgence of the traditional centre, though Mitterrand, the candidate of the left against de Gaulle in 1965 has, significantly, referred to the party's programme as " realistic and interesting," and as the 1973 general election approaches the activities of the parties of the non-communist left, in conjunction with the refurbished radical party, bear watching. Servan-Schreiber himself, although clearly aiming at success in elections for the assembly, is more interested in Pompidou's throne, and if he can resist takeover bids from the likes of Mitterrand, his chances in 1976 (when he will still be just 51) will be exceedingly strong. Necessarily, his overall strategy

includes an assault on the parliamentary stronghold of the Gaullist majority, and this is what we must prepare for three years hence.

With the failure of the French communists to preserve and strengthen links with the moderate left, the new radical phenomenon will certainly provide a powerful attraction. What is equally certain, however, is that the likeliest outcome of Servan-Schreiber's effort will be a re-emergence of the old political centre, as the communists and Gaullists build up attacks from the flanks. Seeking to protect his ground, the radical will be forced to fall back to the loyalty of the traditional centre, and his manifesto will go out of the window.

All of this, in any event, depends upon the early performance of the new radicals. This is the significance of the Nancy by-election. Coupled with the fact that Nancy and the surrounding region was a traditional stronghold of Gaullist electoral support (yet one that had become, of late, increasingly peeved by what it considered Paris double-dealing, which led to the resignation in protest of the incumbent Gaullist deputy) the election is also to be seen as a half term report on the Pompidou administration. Win or lose for Servan-Schreiber, one could not ignore the fact that a large section of the local Nancy political establishment pointedly invited him to stand, despite the nomination of an official Gaullist candidate. The outcome was, in this context, revealing. A massive dent appeared in the Gaullist majority and Servan-Schreiber was swept into the national assembly with an impressive show of support. Even after recalling the habit of representative systems to punish the governing majority at local elections, the victory of the radicals did illustrate the very simple point that this new party is seen as *the* valid alternative, and one which can feed on a variety of discontents.

Now that the prime minister, Chaban-Delmas, is to be challenged in Bordeaux in the by-election for his parliamentary seat (held, under a constitutional twist that has developed under the fifth republic, by a substitute nominee) both by the radicals and by the left, now suitably engaged in argument and vacillation, it is certain that the opposition, at least, will become most entertaining. One indispensable observation is that the Gaullist majority defies orthodox political classification, and this complicates, often invalidates, treatments of the French situation. It is facile to accept the Gaullist group as a counterpart, say, to the British Conservative Party. To begin with, the Gaullist majority is made up of several separate sections. An ally of this majority, for example, is the republican independent group. Although regarded as part of the Gaullist family it retains a potential will of its own and is, moreover, growing in strength: in 1962 the republican independents gained 35 seats, but had raised this tally to 64 in the 1968 elections. In this last ballot, as if to emphasise the probationary nature of their relationship with the more overtly Gaullist groups, the RI fielded some candidates openly in opposition to the official Gaullist nominee. They remain, that is to say, a threat to the cohesion of the present majority as do, presumably, members of the reformist wing of the Gaullist group itself in the event of a tightening of the grip already taken by that sector of the governing majority that gives Gaullism a reactionary face to outside observers.

Gaullism, then, is a self contradictory phenomenon. Its borrowings from the policies of the traditional left helped explain its attraction of so many communist and socialist votes in the early

elections of the fifth republic. Gaullist foreign policy rarely provoked the French Communist Party since the latter harboured few resentments in this sphere. The assumption of leadership by Pompidou simply adds to the confusion and proves the point: Pompidou began life as an ardent socialist, a desciple of Jaurés, and is now the spokesman of a national movement so many have dismissed as reactionary and facist. In a sense the Gaullist movement bears comparison to the Congress Party of India. The Congress Party, too, attempted to provide a new politics based on national idealism. It absolved the habit of central leadership from the Nehru dynasty, and found common cause in the rejection of foreign rule. By mid-1964, however, when Nehru died, it was already becoming clear that 20 years of independent political development and an accumulation of military and economic shortcomings were together producing stresses that Congress could not contain. The death of Nehru simply exacerbated and strengthened existing divisions. India, on the other hand, is sub-continental in dimension and is suffering inevitable pressures from the highly separatist governments in Kerala, Bengal and elsewhere. In India, that is, it will be the centre failing to hold. In France, thanks in part to the contribution of Gaullism, the centre is still the prize.

dangerous times

As France moves into the 1970's perhaps we should warn her that other '70's have been dangerous times. The Franco-Prussian war of 1870 was followed by years of rebellion and civil strife that was to end in the *Boulangism* of the 1880's. The revolution itself interrupted the '70's a hundred years before. The next ten years will have its conflict. It will be conflict between presidential power and the reawakened demands of the assembly. The complicating factor will be the position of prime minister. The movement towards powerful executive power steamed ahead under de Gaulle, mainly because of the personal influence of the general, but this formula included a controlled parliament and a committed prime minister; committed, that is, to the Gaullist line. This requires two things: a strong presidential figure, and a sympathetic assembly. Neither of these can be guaranteed. The American presidential method triumphed, against the original intentions of the constitution-writers, who thought they were producing a democratic parliamentary structure, because there developed a conventional acceptance of the almost by-partisan quality of the chief office. Moreover, the assemblies in the United States eventually absorbed some of the traditions of the British, while political factors produced a simplified pattern of parties. The president is given great freedom of decision, and the lines of congressional control are fairly primitive (withdrawal of funds, examination of witnesses in committee). This fact, added to the noticeable habit of the vast majority of voting Americans of seeing the president as national leader rather than party man (once the election is out of the way) gives the US president immense power. On the other extreme, the British prime ministerial system, because it relies on tight disciplinary control of parliamentary majorities, gives great power to a British leader. In France they have hovered between the two, and run the risk of having neither.

Under de Gaulle there was no issue, but as the years pass, and the popularly elected French president chooses his prime ministers, he will be faced increasingly with the problem of squaring his choice with the prevailing mood of the deputies. Until now there has

developed a triangular pattern, with Gaullist president, prime minister and assembly. This will pass, and if a favourable assembly is the lynchpin there could be excessive friction if the complexion of that assembly is changed through elections. True, the constitution separates executive from parliament, no minister is permitted to sit as a deputy, but that constitution has operated only with strong Gaullist representation. The only real solution is to advertise the office of president so successfully that it will become the centre of power (as it is intended to be) and of gravity, reducing the appeal of the assemblies to the parties. There has been a start made on this, but in the end there will remain a sticky problem: what to do with the prime minister.

The American president has never had one ; the British prime minister has no competitive head of state ; the West German constitution relies on the notion of a weak president. The two headed French state has set itself a question to answer, and as soon as the incumbent president fails to retain the momentum that was built up under de Gaulle, the offiice of prime minister will recover ground. If the political balance of the assembly (which is elected every five years, the president every seven) moves against the current president, his cabinet nominees will have a tough time ; the majority party, moreover, will so pressurise the government that the president will be forced to dissociate himself. He will retire to a certain apoliticism which, while it has been the aim of many in France, including General de Gaulle, would nevertheless be a departure for the fifth republic, which has hitherto had a president " of the majority." De Gaulle, therefore, left all the course corrections, the most difficult ones, at least, to his successors. Pompidou has much greater political ability than de Gaulle, but his tenure is not guaranteed beyond 1976. French politics lasts for ever. The problem is still, even now, that of the distribution of power and of the nature of the state.

the socialist dilemma

The story of the *section francaise d'internationale ouvrière,* the French socialist party, has been that of the failure to square its own doctrinal inclinations with the massive, and entrenched, appeal of the communist left and the erratic attractions of the conservative and Gaullist right. As a consequence, the French socialists forfeited an early claim to be a major party in France and a primary force in the field of reform. The SFIO emerged from the war with nearly 4½ million votes, equal to the support of the new MRP and only a little lower than the communist party, which has consistently polled high returns since 1945. Only the crisis mentality of 1958, always a means of slashing the communist vote, took the communist share of the total national return below 20 per cent (and even then by a marginal amount). But in the six year period after 1945 the socialists disputed amongst themselves the nature of their own role and reduced themselves from a party of the government, and a senior one at that, to a faction of the opposition. The same process was to repeat itself after 1958.

The French socialists face a spectrum of rivalry that is not known to the Labour movement in Great Britain and is no longer known to social democrats in Germany. To begin with, the SFIO is confronted with a powerful competitor in the shape of the French Communist Party. The PCF is relatively young. It emerged, in fact, from the congress at Tours in 1920 when Leon Blum and the moderate socialists went

in one direction and a large group on the left abandoned the movement, accepted the 21 conditions of the second congress of the comintern, and became an independent communist party. The French communists, because of this, have certain qualities reserved for 20th century innovations, and because of the timing of their emergence have close links with Moscow. As the Garaudy affair illustrated, this is still very true. Nevertheless, or perhaps consequently, the French Communist Party has attracted enormous support.

The reason for this is not certain. Goguel, an authority on the development of parties in France, argues that the party does not attract simply from the impoverished peasantry or urban proletariat, as we are normally led to believe. For a number of sociological and historical reasons Goguel argues the PCF appeals to the "working class elite," the same strata of politicised working class that seemed to desert the internationalist line prior to 1914 and help take the social democratic parties, especially in Germany, into their national establishments and away from trans-national solidarity. In France, partly because it was not tainted by 19th century revisionist marxism as were the social democratic parties, the appeal of the party intensified. It was not, therefore, dependent simply upon straight forward working class support that could easily move to follow a rival socialist party ; the party's strength, in this way, was protected, and it has become a facet of post-war French politics that the communist vote has remained remarkably constant. Only a crusading appeal to the " radical electors," such as that of de Gaulle in 1958, or a doctoring of the electoral system, has seriously affected either the communist vote or the communist strength in the national assembly. The PCF appeals to the totality of the French revolutionary spirit, and it is well to remember that in France this is often considered a test of true Frenchness. In the presidential election of 1969 Jacques Duclos, the communist candidate, could still collect a good fifth of the votes cast.

In contrast, the most the SFIO could offer in its electoral contests was a programme of non-communist reform. As if this were not disabling enough, the socialists were faced, after 1944, with a new *mouvement républicain populaire*. The MRP, a movement drawing upon both the *Résistance* and the Roman Catholic idea for its strength, offered both novelty and the prospect of reform based on control of the political centre. The socialist party, in the event, was trapped in the jaws of a doctrinal dilemma, and never really escaped. Mollet, who became secretary general of the SFIO in 1946, fully realised the problem and attempted to revive a doctrinal purity, pursuing a role between the communist left and the MRP. For a short time this succeeded and the French administration gingerly proceeded on the tripartite basis of communist, socialist and MRP collaboration. This Mollet policy of independent socialism within the government failed, and from this failure can be traced the decline in the fortunes of the SFIO, that has never been fully reversed. A central factor in the defeat of the Mollet programme was the gathering spirit of confrontation at the international level, especially during and after 1947. The communists found it relatively simple to retreat to a position of doctrinaire opposition to a developing anti-soviet stand on the part of the French government ; similarly, the parties of the centre and right eventually adopted a definite attitude of pro-western alignment. De Gaulle helped the process along by launching the RPF in the Spring of 1947, when the whole question of the

French commitment was still in a fluid state. In May the socialist premier, Ramadier, followed up by ejecting the communist ministers from the cabinet.

That there should have been a socialist prime minister in this immediate post-war period is a mark of the prominence of socialist leaders generally. Blum, Moch and Mayer were also in positions of influence. This, nevertheless, worked against the ideas of Mollet, who wished to prevent a polarisation of political forces in France and retain a certain relevance for SFIO policies. As the commitment crisis intensified during 1947 and 1948, however, Mollet lost out to the strong men of the party (Ramadier, Blum, Moch) and the leadership split over both the requirements of foreign policy and the eternal problem of participation or opposition in the government. The dilemma was to persist, and by early 1950, after a refusal by prime minister Bidault to meet socialist domestic policy, the socialists withdrew from the French cabinet for the first time since the end of the war. For the remainder of the fourth republic they were to oscillate between one alternative and the other. They left the government in February of 1950, returned to it in July and finally moved into the opposition proper in 1952. As if to pinpoint the erratic quality of the socialist performance, Guy Mollet was made prime minister in 1956. As a result of this uncertain status, the impact of socialist opinion on French domestic or foreign policy under much of the fourth republic was minimal.

They had suffered a decline in electoral fortunes since 1945, seeing their parliamentary strength reduced from 146 seats to 94 in January 1956. Under the fifth republic, facing a massive popular swing to the Gaullist parties, which have always been able to attract from all areas of the political spectrum, and a damaging reform of the electoral system, the socialist party suffered a further reduction of its assembly foothold to 44 seats. The socialist problems were to multiply. The party had opposed de Gaulle during the Algerian crisis, voting 117-3 against accepting him. Even then, however, before the fourth republic finally died, the alternative was only a popular front in which the socialist voice would need to compete with others far stronger, and in the end it was the socialist conversion that enabled de Gaulle to return. Led by Auriol, Mollet and Deixonne, the party decided to back de Gaulle. Even then, the majority within the socialist group was a mere three; dilemmas persisted. In the investiture debate for de Gaulle the socialist stand was reversed: 42 socialists supported him, 49 opposed. With the Algerian situation worsening, however, de Gaulle succeeded in gathering a majority of 105 (covering the greater part of the centre and right deputies, and half the socialists) and the new republic emerged.

With a strong Gaullist representation in the national assembly after the 1958 general election, and with a disastrously diminished socialist and communist sector, the socialist position had deteriorated seriously. And when Mollet, given a post of minister of state in de Gaulle's first fifth republic cabinet, resigned in December 1958 in protest against the new economic policies of the government, the decline was compounded. Hence, with a communist party led by demoralised and conservative leaders of the old guard, and a socialist group failing in its lukewarm efforts to revitalise itself, the fifth republic began its life dominated by the attitudes of the conservative right and centre. The Gaullist vote has steadily increased; the parties of the left have failed to stimulate. Thus, when the

radical element has been awakened it has taken the form of open, and anarchistic, insurrection in the streets; when the refugees from the established order have stood their ground it has been around alternatives of the centre. The new radical socialist party under Servan-Schreiber has looked to this potential. The most the left has pursued has been confederations for electoral purposes, and these have been riddled with internal dissent. A president, say Mitterrand, prised into the Elysée by communist and socialist collaboration would soon be presiding over a chaos of doctrinal strife. The disunity of the French left and, more especially, the dismaying poverty of its thought, have left the field wide open to the dictates of the Gaullist system.

This total lack of cohesion within the opposition has denied power to all representatives of the non-Gaullist left. The communist party, which still has 4½ million electoral supporters, has lurched from crisis to doctrinal crisis. Its feeble responses to the events of 1968, both in Paris and in Czechoslovakia, were followed by a programme of internal bitchiness that saw Garaudy and then Charles Tillon (a *Résistance* hero and a militant communist, active even before the founding of the French party itself) expelled. Instead of healing their differences, party members seem to be earnestly developing them. The party has toyed with the idea of a popular front during 1970, but its possible allies see little attraction in the offer. The left generally, in fact, is in a totally fluid state, which only serves to magnify the desperation of social democrats who still hope for a revival of SFIO prestige. The socialists have not recovered from the outbreak of federation sickness that gathered force during the 1960's. If these electoral combinations were seen as a salvaging act, they failed to work. In the March 1967 elections, the socialist-radial federation polled less votes and gained less seats than the component parties had collectively gathered previously. Disastrously, in the elections of June 1968, in the wake of the May crisis, the federation had its parliamentary strength cut in half.

Unwittingly, the federation tactic will prove the final blow for the old French socialist party. For, submerged in the federation and its after effects, the party is in no real position to counteract the centrist alliance project of Servan-Schreiber so as to retain its autonomy. The socialist contribution to such an alliance, which if successful will cause serious, possibly permanent, damage to the communist party, will be important, but it will in no way be socialist. Duverger and other leading French analysts have pointed to the centrist experiment as the logical antidote to a complacent Gaullist majority. In becoming so, however, it will present the communists with a first class problem of tactics and will deliver to the socialist rump a final stamp of unsocialist approval as the alliance absorbs its members.

2. the economic fulcrum

For a soldier de Gaulle did remarkably well in appreciating to the full the value of sound economics as the demagogue's best friend. As Alexander Werth suggests, de Gaulle dropped out in early 1946 because he realised that the France he was attempting to lead was pitiably weak, dependent upon massive American aid and internally divided on economic and social policy.

This was not, the general knew, the sort of France that could make demands, as new premiers made their pilgrimage to Washington for new credits. How satisfied, in contrast, de Gaulle must have been when circumstances returned him to power in 1958. Despite domestic uncertainty and an economic precariousness, the France he inherited had provided the groundwork for a new resurgence. Monnet's " planning " had already reached its tenth year and was beginning to produce results. The advantages of membership of the coal and steel community and the common market were beginning to be enjoyed. The coal and steel pool had existed since 1952 and, meshing with certain elements of Monnet's overall industrial scheme, eased some critical bottlenecks in French basic industries. The common market was barely in existence by 1958, but its demands on the French economy, in terms of modernisation and research, were gathering pace. Nevertheless, the common market and the other bodies created by the treaties were already established by the time of de Gaulle's succession, and the best he could do was accept them and turn them to his own advantage, and this he was to do.

The fifth republic was to capitalise on the faltering start made by its predecessor and drag parts of France, kicking and screaming, into the 20th century. The instability of the last days of the old republic, and the lack of continuous political direction of finances (there had been well over twenty changes of minister under the fourth republic) had given de Gaulle serious economic problems to solve, although he called on a politician of the old order, M. Pinay, to produce the answers. However, de Gaulle rid himself of Pinay once the economy, through a series of stiff measures (including a devaluation), had found its true feet, and France was able to accumulate vast reserves of gold and show growth rates often above those of the United States, sometimes even above those of West Germany.

Economic traditionalists such as MM Pinay and Rueff saw the greatest potential in the restriction of wages, but though producing the desired effect, stability in the eyes of foreigners, the measures consolidated the appeal of the French Communist Party and produced for the French socialists the same dilemma of " participation or opposition " that they had faced in 1949. Mollet rebelled against the Débre government and led the SFIO into opposition, and, just as the socialists had left the government in 1950 and watched it launch the coal and steel community as a bystander, so the socialists were preparing in the first years of the fifth republic to move to a position of relative ineffectiveness in an opposition where communists always stole the doctrinaire thunder.

There was to be a lot of economic rationalisation in the first few years of de Gaulle's rule, but the policies were to reflect the same notion of paternalistic centralism that shone through the overall political climate of de Gaulle and of Gaullism. The most enlightening example is the development of regional planning in France. The planning of Monnet, which dates from 1947, was basically investment biased and operated through a central commission, which developed investment programmes in accordance with co-ordinated needs.

Most regional planning machinery, on the other hand, was set up under the fifth republic. The interministerial committee for regional planning was established in November 1960. But, instead of truly regional planning councils, in France the centralising notion persists. There responsibility has been given, very largely, to a delegate, a representative of the prime minister, who has the task of co-ordination, formulation and arbitration on matters of regional development. He is, in other words, a central official with regional concerns.

Public investment is still programmed, in the main, at the national level. Slight devolution has taken place, but the channelling of funds to regional projects still tends to move through agencies of the government, not through local or private concerns. This is not necessarily a criticism of method ; the situation is simply useful as an illustration of the persistence of certain habits. France is far more open to decentralisation than many western European states. It is geographically immense, twice the area of Great Britain or West Germany, and has marked varieties of locality. With a Mediterranean South, Atlantic West, Alpine East, industrial North and centre, with vast agricultural areas and independently minded wine producing regions, France remains a political oddity in western Europe through its adherence to the dogma of centralism.

In other ways France has moved against its tradition. She has created the multi-department group, the *circonscription d'action régionale,* which is a collection of departments overseen by a regional prefect, and she uses these groups to implement aspects of the national plan. But, once again the same practice, the regional prefect comes under the prime minister and the central departments of state, and is really a unit in the national plan. He centralises his data and fits into the patchwork picture that has emerged in France since the war and which makes impossible the sort of regionalism that has gained popularity in this country. The momentum in France, even though the idea of regional *stimulation* has developed, is against local autonomy.

In the latest phase of the plan, for the period 1966-1970, the regional idea has been merged with the national objectives contained in the plan itself. It is hoped that the regions, through the machinery of consultation provided, can influence the growth of economic activity in their own localities. The notion is good, the facilities (almost inevitably) lacking, for this fifth plan outlines the ten sectors of investment in which the regions will combine with the national plan structure to develop regional economic strength (that is, schools, universities, sports, culture, health and social facilities, transport and communications, telecommunications, urban facilities, water and administration) and omits entirely the type of investment which really could produce any regional self sufficiency: manufacturing investment, industrial reorganisation or large scale capital outlay. Where planned investments destined by the plan for a particular region are of "national interest" the region has no influence at all ; to quote the official line "with investments of national interest the regional prefects are consulted *only as to the local conditions under which the investments will be effected.*" (Regional Planning in France, p. 15. *Ambassade de France* No. B/42/2/8).

As a reflection of this increasing concentration of power in Paris the practice has grown up of discussing the idea of greater decentralisation. This, in itself, is innovatory in France. A regional development policy has blossomed which

aims at directing funds to backward areas and producing regulations and inducements which might encourage interest in declining regions. Ironically, such energetic measures merely increase the power of the centre, since it now becomes the reservoir of initiative and money.

The government seems pleased with its regional policies. The policy, it says, " has created new relations of solidarity at regional level," and then goes on to damn itself by pointing out that " it is very much in evidence in regions such as Brittany and Alsace " (op cit, p 28), for Brittany has maintained and developed a deep antagonism with Paris precisely because of excessive ignorance, by the government, of Breton wishes for greater independence. Alsace is even more significant as illustration, for it was in neighbouring Lorraine, where Gaullist following was almost as strong as in Alsace, that Servan-Schreiber handed out a drubbing only recently to the incumbent Gaullist deputy in a by-election. It was the Lorraine way of protest against dictatorship from Paris ; it could so easily have been Alsace. If the government chooses to see Breton opposition and Lorraine discontent as features of its regionalisation programme, then the most we can do is observe the facts. Indeed, official reports on the regional question point out that sociologists and economists are not convinced of the success boasted by Paris: sociologists point out the inadequacy of social relations, economists place the accent on the new regions' economic dependence upon Paris, geographers regret that administrative criteria have been given more weight than others (op cit, p 29).

The French government reacted to internal inefficiency by attempting to regionalise some of its policies. It produced, however, little above administrative reform, which increased the power of the state to intervene. Under the regional planning programme Napoleonic centralisation was attacked, but only in order to streamline the chain of command. France was divided into 20 regions, with a regional prefect in each, but this merely erroded the departmental base, and increased central power in an indirect fashion. Despite efforts to expand the independence of local bodies, control has moved in the reverse direction ; for example, in the period 1962-1965 the state doubled its subsidies to the communes to allow for the implementation of the fourth plan, and in the five year period from 1959 to 1964 public credit institutions nearly doubled the size of their loans to the localities. This technique simply increases the reliance on the central administration, a reliance that can be broken only through more realistic regional policies involving decentralised taxation and local representative organs. With all of this is mind, it is comically ironic that de Gaulle fell on a referendum that proposed, with Senate reforms, changes in regional organisation. They refused de Gaulle and forewent the reforms. They presumably thought it a fair exchange.

Common Market competition produced enormous problems of reorganisation. There had been under the earlier republics a tradition of mercantilist protectionism, and added to the serious stagnation that enveloped France in the interwar period (national *per capita* income rose from 5000 francs in 1913 to only 5,500 francs in 1938, while in real terms French industrial capacity dropped by 10 per cent), this left France ill prepared to meet any challenges after 1944. It was Monnet's wish that France should be exposed to a degree of competition that would stimulate higher efficiency. The coal and steel community helped do this and after 1958 the

demands of the common market placed even greater strains on the French economy. De Gaulle or not, action on the modernisation front would have become essential.

The heart of the common market, as France had intended, was the agricultural system. Yet the French discovered, and are still discovering, that their agricultural industry will have to face a process of continuous rationalisation and investment if it is not to explode in a gathering pressure of inefficiency. They had the guidance fund of the common agricultural policy, as they intended, but had to augment those mechanisms from within their own system. The reforms of 1960 and 1962 aimed at modernising farming and making of farmers a group equal in status to other important producing groups. The small farm, the crux of the problem, was attacked: mergers were encouraged, land development funds were made available and development agencies were created. An attempt was made to reorganise the market structure in agriculture. A fund for regularising farm markets was established in 1960 with government grants of over £100 million. The objects have been to produce a uniformity of pricing methods, develop a more efficient set of practices and to raise exports. A social fund was set up in 1962 to expand the range of social benefits available to the farming community, and during 1960 and 1962 legislation appeared aimed at producing a horde of agricultural colleges and schools.

Near self sufficiency is France's greatest economic strength. It explains not only the reforms that the government has introduced in order to maintain this self sufficiency, but also, more important, the obsession the French have displayed concerning the common agricultural policy (CAP) of the community. The policy was formulated very much in reflection of French needs, and there is no possibility that the structure will be sacrificed in the entry negotiations with Britain and the other applicants. While it remains the pivot of Anglo-French differences on the specific issue of common market entry (the British agricultural system is diametrically opposed to the CAP) and borrows from the general distrust that pervades all conversation between Paris and London, the French do have a direct and frantic interest in seeing the CAP survive untouched. With the prospect of greater rationalisation for French agriculture approaching, in the wake of an acceptance of the EEC commission's Mansholt plan for farming reconstruction in the community (which involves the raising of farming unit sizes and the encouragement of small operators to leave the land), the need to protect the existing mechanisms is paramount. There can be no doubt about this particular point —the CAP is not negotiable.

The French farming community absorbs close to 15 per cent of the national work force in comparison with around 3 per cent in Great Britain, though the recent assaults on inefficient farm units (through government rationalisation schemes and through projects piloted by the commission of the European community) have introduced a noticeable drift from the land. In paralleling, in lesser measure, the contraction of small farming in this country several centuries ago, this movement away from the rural areas will, coupled with existent, contemporary economic and social pressures, provide an additional source of political volatility. It means a reduction of the same farm vote that moved the hands signing the common agricultural policy agreements; it means a swelling of the misplaced urban population sprawl that finds it so easy, in France, to react to political clowns.

The shopkeepers and small businessmen fell in with Poujade (who is now happily tucked away high up in the Gaullist hierarchy); the footloose farmer add another factor of instability.

Lord Walston's response (*Farm gate to Brussels*, Fabian Research Series 288) to this is to accept the main points of the CAP, by relying on increased home production and by guaranteeing reasonable returns to the British farmer, but to develop a mechanism for preventing over production. We must, he says, be prepared to rely on overseas suppliers where there is a long term price advantage. This is a valid approach provided consumers are not expected to bear the whole burden of such policies, but it still overlooks the *political* resistance to changes in the CAP, from within the six.

The opening of tariff walls after the signature and implementation of the Rome treaties placed greater pressure on French industry, too, and the government was obliged to respond. Business was given support and finance for modernisation, but large sectors of French business had never been convinced of the wisdom of common markets, and whereas the agricultural lobby was placated by the construction of the producer oriented CAP, the big wheels of business were expected to fend for themselves. As a result, European business has moved into a stage of concentration and multi-national monopoly, producing immense manufacturing concerns that neither the Rome treaties nor the existing state of trade union organisation in Europe provide for.

The legacy of de Gaulle in the economic field, therefore, draws from this ten year period of adaptation and consolidation of the centralist method. The legacy, however, was double edged. On the one hand the Pompidou administration inherited a state machine where all the lines of information and control ran from the centre outwards, but accompanying this, the stability and international strength that de Gaulle fostered up to 1968 was achieved at the expense of neglect of the social implications of his policies, and in spite of the fact that the modern trading state is an integral part of the international, co-operative, commercial system. Hence, de Gaulle founded the economic power of his fifth republic on discipline and restraints at home, and founded his fabulous independence in the world on forgetting that other states grew in power. Both melted away in 1968: the first through the riots of May and the economic distress produced by the speculation and strikes that followed and the inflationary increases that ended them; the second through the baleful discovery in November that the West Germans had a pretty handy economy, too, and that in the last analysis France was no more independent of international economic fluctuations than the *Bourse*. 1968, clearly, was the end of de Gaulle.

Pompidou moved into the Elysée, then, with a greater sense of reality. Even though he had taken great delight in laughing up his sleeve from Rome while the general performed in Paris, Pompidou must have absorbed the lessons of ten years of grandeur. And in the final analysis, when you take away the grandeur from a noble presidency, there is little but boredom left. This is what Pompidou is offering, but in the circumstances France can afford little else. The collapse of de Gaulle's régime in 1968 showed one thing, at least: de Gaulle could only operate from a position of economic and political strength. He resigned in 1946 because the weapons he needed were denied him; his real foreign policy initiatives in the fifth republic did not fully develop until 1962 and

after, when the Algerian tightrope had been traversed. By this time the economic strength of France had been significantly increased, and the president could move on to the Franco-German treaty, and the public obstruction of British approaches to Europe.

To give him credit, Pompidou has made an effort. With Chaban-Delmas he has invented the new society. Like the version introduced by General de Gaulle, that of Pompidou started with a devaluation, in August of 1969. Then, with the trade figures going further into the red, the new government introduced a package of severe economy measures. This "recovery plan," as it was described, was based on a direct attack on personal consumption, but by early 1970 it was beginning to show signs of succeeding and as the planning for the sixth plan 1971-5 gathered pace there was much talk in French business circles of a new growth cycle. The employer federation called for a planned growth rate of 7 to 8 per cent, a high rate by British standards, well above EEC projections and nearer to those of Japan.

It is interesting to note the preoccupation shown in France with Japan's economic expansion. One can detect a hint of immense covetousness, chiefly because some French economists feel that the Japanese achievement can be repeated in France, taking her way beyond Germany and Great Britain and into an undisputed lead in western Europe. In many ways the countries are similar: a certain paternalism, though in Japan it is not from the state but from industrial and commercial chieftains, and a similar regard for the effectiveness of private savings as an economic force. If France does embark on a new growth pattern through the 'seventies it will be reproducing exactly the pattern of de Gaulle's period: economic weakness, devaluation and austerity, growth. This pattern had a definite impact on the development of de Gaulle's overall policy structure, leading him into greater and greater self righteousness in international affairs. Pompidou, a banker, will be more shrewd. The foreign policy of France, de Gaulle used to say, is not governed by the state of the *Bourse*. Pompidou knows that on this, at least, the General was wrong, and events bear this out.

The new society, whatever this irritating phrase connotes, will be a France of greater introspection. It simply remains to be seen whether violence will be the midwife of this particular new society. How has the new society fared? Well, there has been a new law curtailing demonstrations, passed by the national assembly in May in the face of unified opposition from all on the left, and minister of the interior Marcellin is doing his best to emulate the socialist Moch who made such a useful impression on the French political establishment in the 'forties by hammering the communists from the same ministry. Marcellin is determined not to be caught asleep, as was the administration in 1968, and has spent his time collating extensive dossiers on the disruptive elements in the universities and on the streets. The left-wing newspaper *La cause du peuple* was the first to feel the boot; in May, 1970, two of its contributors were brought to court for inciting murder. On the same day the government closed in on the movement publishing the newspaper. Geismar, a leading figure on the militant left, was arrested two days later. With the intervention of Sartre on the side of the victims came the less appealing side of the business: respectable militants, particularly Nobel prize winners, are not to be bullied. The purge quietly continues.

Indeed, the present government seems to show a remarkable degree of selectivity in everything it does. In foreign policy this is very prominent. Not only does it choose its militants, it also chooses its pressure groups. When the road hauliers (economic key-holders as strong as the railwaymen) demonstrated against government measures earlier in the year the measures were cancelled or deferred ; when the shopkeepers tried it, they were imprisoned. And if the students fail to adjust to the implications of the 1969 act of orientation, which proposes to tackle the question of university representation ? On this prime minister Chaban-Delmas is quite clear : " the act has made provisions for the government to be able to take special measures, and, if the occasion arises, you may be sure that it will not fail to do so." (7 April, 1970.) There seems to be developing, as a product of a deepening antagonism between certain social areas and the government, a habit of confrontation and violence. Now that France has turned her eyes from the world, to which de Gaulle directed them, to her own garden, many see nothing but weeds. Marcellin must have nightmares about Candide.

This steady trend towards greater conservatism in France, which is showing signs of alienating those Gaullists who feel affinities with elements of the left (Gaullism, being a doctrine rooted in a certain spiritual idealism, finds it possible to accommodate a multitude of principles), produced a reaction of jubilation in some official circles in Paris to the victory of the right in the British elections in June. It confirmed their own judgment, and Nixon accepted the argument, that the western world was moving, at last, against the evils of reform. It was the only crumb of comfort the French could find in the Conservative triumph : Conservative foreign policy would mean less freedom for Paris in the areas she was fast exploiting, South Africa, Rhodesia, the Mediterranean, and the Conservative negotiators in Brussels would be candidates who actually, and honestly, wanted to join EEC.

The prospect is that of greater economic unrest in France, and presumably greater repression, despite projects for high growth rates. The side effects of the devaluation of 1969 are beginning to work through the French economy, producing pressures on wages and prices. This seems to be accompanied by a singular lack of preparedness on the part of Giscard d'Estaing, the finance minister. In November of 1969, three months after the devaluation of the franc, he forecast that the six months after the currency readjustment would produce price increases of " about 2.7 per cent " (press conference 19 November 1969).

In the debate on economic policy in the French national assembly during May of 1970 he seemed to have changed course : " Price increases are still high . . . For the whole of 1970 a 4 per cent increase was forecast and this will require careful watching . . . In March, 1970, the rate of price increases was 5.6 per cent." Yet with post-devaluation price inflation setting in (a common phenonemon), the government is promising an end to the disinflation programme that formed the heart of the " recovery plan " of 1969. This would mean relaxing controls at a time when they are most needed. The alternative is to reimpose the restrictions, or replace them, as Giscard d'Estaing has already proposed, with " permanent rules." This sounds suspiciously like the institutionalised controls that have been attempted in this country but which have raised such vociferous opposition.

Imposed on a situation as touchy as that existing in France at the moment, such controls would lead to serious trouble. A beginning was made over the planned *contrats de progrès,* written agreements with contractual force signed by both employers and unions. The government line is similar to the one proposed by the Conservatives here : the government says it is not out to bash the unions but to give them greater responsibility. A whole batch of such agreements was signed in the nationalised sector early in 1970.

Significantly, the communist-led CGT refused. Not only, it seems, do the communists wish to preserve their doctrinal freedom, but they appreciate that there are some difficult times ahead in which written agreements are more likely to protect the interests of employers ; when the chips are down, too, the communists will remember that direct action produced unexpected results for the students and workers in 1968. The incident, refusal to sign the contracts, serves chiefly to light up the ping-pong characteristics of French communism : seeking popular fronts of the left, yet isolated within the union movement ; casting out the Garaudy softies, yet spending the Spring of 1968 deciding not to fall outside the constitutional order. Yet, as always, the long run fortunes of the communist party will be based on its social contacts, and these improve as the economic situation deteriorates. We shall have to wait and see. At the moment the greatest enemy of the communist party is its own erratic idealism.

3. foreign policy: the selective process

There are some, like the leaders of the British Labour Party, who look upon foreign policy as a time consuming chore. There are others, such as half the population of France, who look upon it as fun. Perhaps, assuming that grown up states feel the pressing need for foreign policies, it is better to enjoy it. The British Foreign Office is traditionally obsessed with French foreign policy, more so since 1945, since it realises that French policy could so easily be its own.

The foreign policy of France has become highly personalised, more than in any other major state apart from China. This has tended to give French policy an aggressive characteristic, both because that policy has been led by men who, like Robert Schuman, Mendès-France, de Gaulle, positively wanted to lead it, and because when a policy structure is elaborated by an identifiable individual the easiest thing to do is analyse the action in terms of grudge or idealistic ambition.

The *Quai d'Orsay*, the traditional source of French foreign policy, has suffered serious decline during the 20th century. This decline was exacerbated in the interwar period by its lack of real success on the international scene and by its failure to maintain the high standards of its personal intake. Since 1944 this trend has continued, and has been assisted by the practice, developed in the main by de Gaulle, of filling the French foreign office positions with technocrats. Couve de Murville was a perfect example; his background was that of inspector of finances, yet under de Gaulle's first administration he was already in a senior position on the permanent staff of the *Quai d'Orsay*. The French foreign office was failing to attract high grade individuals because foreign policy, during the interwar period especially, had lost its glamour. The weakness from which France suffered during the 1920's and '30's produced a slavish reliance on London, and the instability of the third republic produced constant changes of cabinet and hence continual replacement of the foreign minister (although this office, alone, has always suffered least from government reshuffles). In the interwar years, however, a degree of continuity was maintained through the work of the permanent head of the foreign office, the secretary general. Throughout the confused period that followed Versailles the backbone of French policy formation was represented by the two secretaries general who ran the department in succession, Berthelot and Léger. But after 1945 this continuity broke down.

Consequently, the contribution of the *Quai* itself to the content of French foreign policy has seriously diminished, more so since the second world war. There was no policy planning staff, as there was in the American state department, that could develop a clear line of policy for successive administrations. Moreover, under the provisional government of General de Gaulle the *école nationale d'administration* had been established to produce professionals for the French civil service (25 years before the Fulton committee recommended it in Great Britain) and the net effect was to provide the *Quai d'Orsay* with "classless technicians" in contrast to the upper class product that once represented typical French foreign service material. This development led many authorities, Grosser and Dumaine among them, to deplore the condition into which the *Quai d'Orsay* had fallen.

There had developed "a progressive proletarianisation of the diplomatic corps," and by 1950 the *Quai* was packed with "technicians" led by Couve de Murville (later foreign minis-

ter under de Gaulle in the fifth republic) and Alphand, both inspectors of finances (that is, professional administrators). On the other hand, this influx of professionals produced a marked shift in the intellectual climate of the French foreign office. There developed a greater competence in the technical foreign policy problems which were to become standard with the advent of Marshall aid, the OEEC and then, after 1950, the economic integration institutions. In addition, traditional prejudices, harboured by the *Quai d'Orsay* and perpetrated, one imagines, by social inertia, began to disappear.

None of this, nevertheless, destroyed the unique quality of the *Quai ;* it remained, though in diluted form, a self-governing community. The lack of any real continuity, after 1945, in the formulation of policy, and the shift of emphasis within the *Quai* towards professionalism made it easier for the foreign minister to impose his own notions. Under Bidault, from 1944 to 1948, French policy sank into the limbo of attempting to pursue the objectives that de Gaulle had provided during the later stages of the war. These attempts were to fall foul repeatedly of the growing antagonism between the allies, especially over Germany. French policy on Germany at that point, borrowed from, or coincided with, parts of both Soviet and Anglo-American policies, but as 1947 wore on the need for total commitment to one particular side in the developing East West argument became irresistable. De Gaulle, now belly aching from the sidelines, pitched in with his Strasbourg speech and launched the *rassemblement du peuple français*. This speech, delivered in April of 1947, came before the address given by General Marshall at Harvard (in June) which was to speed up the process of East West division. In that de Gaulle staked his own personal claim, during that speech in Strasbourg, on his opposition to communist power, " separatists " he called them, a term he was to forget, conveniently, in Quebec twenty years later, he must share the blame for the increasing polarisation of forces in France during 1947. There had been a mounting anti-communist pressure during 1947, and Ramadier kicked the communist ministers out of his government in May, again, before Marshall's offer of aid. True, President Truman had already propounded his doctrine, and the experiences in Greece and elsewhere were confirming latent suspicions in the West. Bevin was adding his bit from London. But the action of de Gaulle in launching his anti-communist crusade in the Spring of 1947 (in a France that was, because it was still searching for commitment, the crucial international actor) was a considerable component in the consolidation of the cold war spirit. He has consistently blamed the division of Europe on the actions of the three at Yalta, to which conference to his perpetual chagrin he was not invited, and even used the same argument to stay out of trouble when Czechoslovakia was invaded in 1968. He should remember his own personal contribution to the battle in April of 1947.

Georges Bidault was elbowed out of the *Quai* following his disastrous performance during the London conferences in the first half of 1948. He had returned from London with nothing to offer the assemblies, which he had continually ignored, but the steady resurgence of Germany. Schuman took over the foreign ministry in July of that year, and the trend of personalised foreign policy was to intensify. Robert Schuman was the worst culprit of all, and it was he, likewise ignoring the assemblies, who was to deliver the knock out punch to the Labour Party's European policy (if there was such a thing) in May of

1950. The historians will probably view the Schuman declaration of 9 May 1950, proposing the foundation of a European coal and steel community, as the pivot of post-war western European history. It also marked the beginning of the serious Anglo-French antagonism that de Gaulle was to personify later.

It has seemed to a number of writers that Schuman's act was simply a reflection of a legendary complex concerning Germany. More to the point, he had made a stab at supremacy in western Europe, and succeeded because his initiative dispensed with both West Germany and Great Britain in one blow. This supremacy was to prevail until 1968, and even then it was not Great Britain that was to challenge it but the coalition government in Bonn. The fact that both London and Paris were to bicker, over a 20 year period, about their prestige in Europe, and then lose out to a third state, provides us with a useful introduction to a discussion of French politics in the '70s. Nevertheless, when de Gaulle took over in 1958 he had the weapon of the EEC, at least, at his disposal. The integrationist efforts of the fourth republic had provided the leader of the fifth republic with a ready made diplomatic organism consisting of six western European states, tied together by the most powerful of all diplomatic forces, economics. With the fourth republic's innovations in economic planning and its eventual commitment to a nuclear deterrent capability, its legacy was chock full of potential, and de Gaulle was not about to squander any of it.

England v. France: from the General to the particular

The passing of de Gaulle leaves one thing unsaid. De Gaulle always defined greatness as "the ability to keep up a great quarrel," but we are mistaken if we think that his disappearance will reduce the level of conflict between British and French governments. Their interests clash too fundamentally and too consistently for that. All that we have now is conflict without daring and without style. We are in for a rough time. As the common market entry negotiations gather speed it is well to remember that those discussions stand at the end of an eternal pattern of destructive antagonism. All that de Gaulle did was to simplify the issues.

During the ten years of de Gaulle's presidency we were subjected to a process of education which had, as its central theme, the simple fact that we were not part of Europe. Our greatest fault, in this respect, is that we lasted out the second world war. Not only did de Gaulle never forgive us for this, but he concluded, accurately, that it made it impossible for the British to make the European commitment. The French had had no choice. De Gaulle began his post-war political career obsessed with the idea of alliances incorporating London, Paris and Moscow. Not only would such an alliance system knock the Germans for good, but it would also prevent any serious American penetration in Europe and leave the French with plenty of space to play diplomats. As a result, the cold shouldering of France during the post-war conferences and the developing rift between East and West that could only mean continued United States occupation, emptied de Gaulle's policies of any content. Rather than preside over the burial of his ideals he dropped out in January, 1946, leaving Georges Bidault to arrange the funeral.

De Gaulle, nevertheless, managed to forget enough of his principles to launch the RPF in 1947, hoping to ride

to power on a surge of anti-communist paranoia. The alliance with Moscow (which de Gaulle had, in fact, signed in 1944) had sunk without trace. The General was to pop up continually through the late '40s and early '50s, at any hint of crisis or threat to the state, to offer himself as saviour. Even this he had given up by 1955, and it must have come as a matter of considerable surprise that the Algerian bone lodged itself firmly in the gullet of the fourth republic and allowed him to announce, in 1958, with a hastily dusted air of inevitability, that he was " at the disposal of the nation."

six and out

The common market story has become part of popular British mythology. This mythology, however, rests on two other myths: that the British were martyred innocents, and that the whole ghastly tragedy was the work of General de Gaulle. We asked for the Schuman initiative in 1950. The Foreign Office should have seen it coming. We were in no position, a decade later, to avoid de Gaulle's obstruction. From the beginning, the only interest of the Foreign Office here was in retarding the growth and consolidation of the European economic experiment of the six. From the first moment, well before the 1957 Rome agreements, the British Government sought to overthrow the concentrated power inherent in the proposed Rome treaty community. Relying on the agreement by the six in Venice in 1956 that the planned union would be open to other members of OEEC (of which we were a founder member), the British Government succeded in recruiting the support of a majority of OEEC member states for an idea of a European free trade area, and discussion on this stalling proposal proceeded concurrently, within the framework of OEEC, with talks amongst the six of the coal and steel community on their own plan for union.

This early British counter attack through the OEEC, backed up by the Scandinavian governments and preferred by many other European states outside the six, was resisted by the French. When de Gaulle arrived at the Elysée in 1958 he put an end to the nonsense. In November of that year he delivered the first *non*, years before the first publicised vote of 1963. Anglo-French battles continued. The British, repulsed, switched from pursuing massive enlargement of the common market to seeking membership itself, having fallen back meanwhile to an entrenched position within EFTA. By 1960 (the same year that the EFTA convention took effect) the British treasury, foreign office and even the federation of British industry had developed pro-market views. In simple terms the government was faced with three alternatives: to join the six, to remain outside the market and survive by our own devices, or to destroy it. Such was the confusion produced by the interaction of the government's objectives that it attempted to incorporate all three, and pursued these collective, though seemingly incompatible, aims to the limits of diplomatic feasibility. This confusion has not disappeared.

British membership of EFTA merely made matters more complicated, however. The attack from London had developed a second front, threatening an inundation of the community by a motley crew of peripheral European states. The French felt justified (and clearly spoke for their six partners much of the time) in rejecting British overtures. By 1962 de Gaulle had found his way around the intricacies of the

western European scene, and had developed his own scale of common market priorities. He had, inevitably, taken sole charge of the direction of foreign policy, and had chosen Couve de Murville to provide enunciation of the more mundane elements involved.

The trick, for de Gaulle, was to control the rate of change within the community, maximising economic and diplomatic gains, minimising restrictions on French freedom. He performed this very well: it meant consolidating the existing state of semi-integration, obstructing British entry and forging a headline catching *rapprochement* with West Germany. During 1962 and 1963 the gains were chalked up: de Gaulle blocked the Fouchet plan (a French project!) in April, 1962; rejected Britain's application in January of 1963 and signed the Franco-German treaty of co-operation and friendship a week later. First victory to Paris.

But as the mythology deepened, the British Government were given definite signs that the French were not prepared to allow too great a swing into supra-nationalism. Not only had the general torpedoed the Fouchet scheme in 1962, he went on, via the agricultural crisis of mid-1965, to place it on record that he was not willing to allow either majority opinions to prevail within the community or arrangements favourable to France to be tinkered with. Failing to impress this point on his five partners, the French delegation was withdrawn from community operations and the decision making organs of the common market languished for many months. A compromise agreement allowed the six to begin work again early in 1966. But this was very much an indication of the level of French thinking on the usefulness of the market. When the community became operative in 1958, France had already begun to feel the beneficial effects of economic reforms at home. After 1958 the fifth republic was to build on these reforms and give itself economic strength sufficient for it to dictate, in great measure, the speed and direction of EEC development. During the Rome treaty negotiations France had already ensured that she would benefit from an advantageous agricultural system and from a privileged position concerning her own overseas possessions. After the emergence of the common market the French persistently sought to impose their will. France succeeded in part in 1965. She had tried the same in 1960, again over agriculture, and had gained, by December of that year, a compromise agreement.

Clearly, 1965 was the key year in the development of the market. It represented the definitive end of supranationality in western Europe, and, in that this provided the final proof to the British that it was safe to take the plunge, it must also be seen as the turning point in British attitudes. The French, it was seen, would look after us. They, too, were worried by the intergrationist dynamic that appeared to have overtaken their partners and the non-political institutions of the community. As Couve de Murville said, in October of 1965 (in the heart of the agricultural crisis): "these negotiations have created an entirely new political situation." It was clear, in other words, that the winner would take all, and de Gaulle was not ready to lose. This destruction by the French of the supranationality issue stands as de Gaulle's common market codicil to the inheritance taken up by Pompidou in 1969. From 1966 the market had completely altered its political direction; indeed that year was the beginning of the completion stage that would finally make of the community a tightly knit entity, but it had opened

with the realisation (manifested in the *impasse* on agriculture) that the community was controlled by one state. That state was France, and the issue was not agriculture, but sovereignty.

The Luxembourg meeting of the foreign ministers of the six in January, 1966, illustrated the point, for Couve de Murville used the conference to offer a French memorandum on co-operation between the council of ministers and the permanent commission, in marked contrast to the original intention underlying the Rome agreements. The greater part of the memorandum was adopted, and the power of the council of ministers was institutionalised. Henceforth, to quote the official record, " unanimity will be required, not only for altering past decisions, but also for taking any new series of important measures: the agricultural financial regulation; organising the market for fruit and vegetables, sugar, and oils and fats . . . etc., etc." (*The common market today*, p 21. Ambassade de France B/32/1/7.) The Conservatives should bear this in mind as they haggle on terms over the next few years. The French government described the 1965 crisis as " a crisis of growth; " that is a graceful turn of phrase.

Pompidou was in on all this, and cannot be separated from the main body of de Gaulle's politics. Analysts in Great Britain have hoped to paint his presidency as one of common market relaxation leading to British entry. His performance at the Hague summit of 1969 is seen as a turning point in French policy. This is true in some respects, but the greatest mistake is to see it as a break in the continuity of de Gaulle's own pattern. The change in emphasis inherent in Pompidou's statements and actions, and it is backed up by his ministers in other ways, is a response to significant changes in the balance of forces in Europe. The French, as a result, are losing interest in the European economic community and are hastily seeking another role elsewhere.

Again, the starting point is 1968: the end of de Gaulle and the end of French supremacy in western Europe. It was coincidence that the general enjoyed his power during the latter half of France's European honeymoon. But he made the most of it. He would have exploited the possibilities of a different set of circumstances: supremacy in South East Asia, in Central Africa, in Germany, had it existed. However, when Bonn dug in her heels, late in 1968, out came the manuals on diplomatic practice at the *Quai d'Orsay* and out came the contingency plans at the Elysée Palace. When Soames was offered, over lunch with de Gaulle a few months later, an Anglo-French conspiracy, we were seeing nothing more than had happened in the 18th century when a French treaty with Austria was signed. That, too, was a *volte-face*, as were the 19th century alliances with Russia, Italy and then Great Britain; and in the 20th century a return to the little *entente* after 1920 represented the same pattern, as did the Schuman declaration of 1950. The Soames episode was the rumblings of yet a further drastic realignment. Such is the French dilemma.

Predictably, Pompidou displayed limitless chagrin in the wake of Brandt's successful negotiations in Moscow in August of 1970. He rejected the German proposal for a western summit. " It is always good to meet," offered Pompidou, " but you have to have something to say to each other." The prospect of Bonn elbowing in on hitherto exclusive practices was clearly too much for the new president. The knives will surely be out for Pompidou's visit to Moscow in October 1970. " As you know,"

added Pompidou, referring to the visit, " I like to have a thorough knowledge of the files." One can almost see him fishing out the standard communiqué that had been used by Couve de Murville in similar circumstances back in January 1967: " If we concluded this agreement with Germany in 1963 (the Adenauer—de Gaulle friendship treaty) and we did not then have the relations with the Soviet Union which we have now, it was because the position and policy of the Soviet Union were different." With a little adjustment, this statement will serve again.

The change, in other words, was initiated by de Gaulle. It is being continued under Pompidou. The British fumbled it, but time will produce the nuclear collaboration and the secret consultations over Berlin and Germany that occupied de Gaulle. Meanwhile, the new president of the republic is out to bury the common market of the six (by making it a market of enlarged proportions, even if he only allows the British an association agreement in the end) and set off in search of surer, and greener, pastures. However, continuity or not, the complexion of French foreign policy has altered. It has lost, inevitably, the dash of de Gaulle ; it has lost the global flavour that the general provided. He saw open diplomatic gates in every geographical direction. By vague language he could keep them open, and the more the voice of France was broadcast, the greater, by some reasoning, she would be. If one gate slammed shut, as one did in Ottawa, another would rest ajar. This is not Pompidou.

the choice for Paris: Europe or the inland sea

The French have taken Napoleon's dictum to heart. A nation of shopkeepers, the British are being invited to look after the common market store. Whether this is facilitated by a close association agreement or an eased entry into the community, the French need help in ramming the lid on western Europe. The Mediterranean awaits. The act of realignment initiated by de Gaulle has been executed with amateur haste by the new government. The task of making friends with London will take time, Bonn will make certain of that ; but the western half of the Mediterranean, once the French took a long look at it, was wide open.

The process was rapid. Pompidou became president in June 1969, and by October the new foreign minister, Maurice Schumann, revived the moribund co-operation agreement with Algiers. In November, Schumann took steps to " consolidate France's exemplary relations with Tunisia." On 6 December 1969, in a broadcast to the country, President Pompidou announced the " re-establishment of traditional relations with North African countries." A new ambassador was being despatched to Morocco, putting an end to four years of Franco-Moroccan feud following on the Ben Barka kidnapping, an affair that poor de Gaulle had taken as personal affrontery. On 15 December, in a further national broadcast, Pompidou announced his policy of "strengthening French presence in the Mediterranean, particularly in the western Mediterranean." King Hassam II of Morocco has been to Paris and invitations for state visits arrive at the Elysée.

This is the post-colonial pay off for France. It is also opportunism of the sort de Gaulle would not have topped, for the Mediterranean offensive of the French fits into a significant change in the outlook of the North African states. It has been clear, since the Rabat conference of Arab governments, that attitudes have changed in the Maghreb.

In the long term this will produce important results in the whole Mediterranean area. France has moved in at the start.

Apart from combining their policies on the Middle East war, and thereby opting out, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco have abandoned various standpoints on differences that have prevented closer collaboration in the past. Tunisia has made border concessions to Algeria ; Algeria has returned appropriated property. Algerian Moroccan relations have been improving consistently for some time. All three governments back Colonel Boumédienne's new line on the evacuation of the Mediterranean basin by Soviet and United States military contingents, a line which is likely to displease Cairo (which is dependent heavily upon Soviet assistance) and benefit France, who is earnestly refurbishing her Mediterranean credentials. This reversal of policy by the Algerian government represents a significant alteration in the distribution of forces in the Mediterranean, and France intends to make the most of it. She is the obvious link for the North African states with western Europe, and as the commission of the EEC, only recently, began pressing for closer EEC connections with Algeria, Paris must sense the immense potential involved. The centre of gravity of French policy, therefore, has changed. It has moved southwards, making of France the bridge between the European community and the states of North Africa and the possible leader of a new western Mediterranean network. Her political and economic presence has been strengthened, and the scale of French military help to the area has increased. Algeria and Tunisia have benefited recently from military agreements with Paris. The Libyan story (which, apart from military hardware, includes a massive $1000 million economic arrangement centred on oil) has been highly publicised. Morocco is in the process of signing military contracts with the French.

In achieving all of this the Pompidou government is reaching heights the British foreign office can only dream of. In moving closer to Algiers the French are driving a wedge between Moscow and the young governments in the western Mediterranean ; by slipping into Libya and back into firmer relations with Morocco they are muscling in on areas of traditional British influence and stamping on United States cultural efforts. Not only is the government in Paris capitalising on a distinct shift in the attitudes of the North African states, she is buttressing her position by working in bilateral accords with the European members of the West Mediterranean club. There has been an under publicised military deal with Spain, concluded (again significantly) at the exact moment that the whole Spanish-United States military/economic relationship was being reviewed in Madrid and Washington. Similar meetings have taken place with the Italian and Portuguese governments with the central theme being arms sales or military co-operation. Apart from representing, as a totality, a high level of diplomatic success for the French, these western Mediterranean arrangements help solve a typically French economic problem: in 1969 overseas orders for French arms dropped by 38 per cent, a heavy loss to the French trade balance. The new Mediterranean offensive will carry, as an incidental, the seeds of a solution to the problem.

In any event, no analysis of French policy can ignore the fact that a highly selective technique has replaced the simplified statesmanship of de Gaulle, his obsession was French influence, which he magnified by obstruction and by awkwardness. It applied to the whole

field of international politics and it produced, in the end, a series of negatives. *Non* to the common market; *non* to the general assembly; *non* to NATO. De Gaulle enjoyed them. Pompidou, who will run things until 1976, at least, prefers others to make the running. He will retain the accomplishments of his predecessor but the concentration of French policy, now more influenced by other personalities in the administration, will be on areas of positive gain.

De Gaulle, and this is a measure of his archaism, relied on the concept of "great power" to give his policies substance. All this in spite of the fact that only two "great powers" now exist, with perhaps a third emerging. The general nevertheless utilised the residual legacies of the great power system to the advantage of France. Realising, for example, that he could not have all his own way in the United Nations, he made an effort to reduce the influence of the general assembly to the level that existed prior to the uniting for peace resolution that the assembly had used during the Korean war to boost its power. The "thingamajig" (as de Gaulle called the UN; supranationality in any form was contemptible) had one redeeming feature: the security council, where France held a permanent seat and could sit alongside real great powers. Similarly, de Gaulle tended to reintroduce the four power concept into any area of dispute that could accommodate it. Four power solutions meant French voices. In Berlin, in the Middle East, anywhere the notion stood up, he used it. Under Pompidou the practice has continued, and where the four power concept seems impractical something else is invented. On Indo-China, Maurice Schumann prefaces his remarks (as he did, for instance, on 2 April 1970) with the expression "France is no doubt best fitted to offer all the parties concerned a supreme chance to seize the opportunity of negotiating." This is strong language. And in such negotiations "no one," says Schumann, "disputes the right of France to participate." Bearing in mind that the French base their rights on their colonial experiences in Indo-China (though they invoke, for technical strength, the Geneva conference of 1954), it seems illogical that on Israel, or on Indo-Pakistani conflicts, not to mention the civil war in Nigeria, they forget the claims that Britain could make on like grounds.

4. an observation on colonial technique

As France moves into the '70s, one observation, in the field of foreign relations, needs to be made. De Gaulle made his appeal in June of 1940 not merely to France but to the empire.

Despite the fact that the empire, in the main, ignored him, the fourth republic inherited a vast overseas territorial establishment. It was to dither between policies on the colonial question for twelve years before going down with it, and because of the dubious French record on colonial emancipation de Gaulle took on a network of contaminated ex-colonial relationships. He was, as the rising star of the third world, to revolutionise the standing of France in the less developed areas and, aided by arrangements salvaged by the fourth republic (the "overseas territories" clauses in the Rome treaty protocols provide an example) he was to push France the way of a post-colonial imperialism. Postwar the French rid themselves of an empire of some 12 million square kilometres and over 70 million subjects. The fourth republic rode a difficult path through the decolonisation phase, having to match it with a programme of economic and political reorganisation in Europe. Algeria, which fell between the two, finally dished the régime.

As a result the constitution of the 1958 republic was largely a "colonial problem" constitution. The preamble to this constitution speaks of an "evolving" concept for colonies, and suggested a constitutional commitment by the French state to the promotion of a changing relationship with her colonial possessions. The referendum of September 1958 seemed to symbolise the new approach: overseas territories were offered a choice as to their connection with France. Guinea, alone, rejected the French community provisions of the fifth republic constitution (for example, article 76) and was cut adrift by Paris with unprecedented speed, to be left casting about for any spare East European, Chinese or Soviet help that might be on offer.

The community never really worked. The French never seemed quite certain whether they wanted a commonwealth or a disguised empire (the distinction in France being that one gives its members a seat in the United Nations, the other a seat in the French national assembly). Partly because of an administrative philosophy that makes it difficult to borrow from the commonwealth structure (they lack a monarchy, and always overformalise their centralism: the French concept of an overseas department, for example, is closer to Portuguese practice than to British) and partly because there had developed, by the middle of de Gaulle's stay, a revised policy of re-ordering France's relations with her former colonies, a more immediate link with each particular territory has been pursued ; that is a series of bilateral agreements, creating a network involving defence, foreign policy, raw materials supply, currency arrangements and so on. This has been the French method of retaining and maximising its influence in the old empire. The greater part of it now falls, conveniently, within the third world and under de Gaulle, who developed a curious knack of appearing as the father of non-alignment, France assumed a strong position in this sphere.

But the generalised approach of de Gaulle, who thought more in terms of gesture than of action, is being replaced by the selectivity that is the main feature of the new French government. In that a thrust has developed where previously there was mere "brilliance," to use the language of de Gaulle, France has become the foremost expansionist power in the world. Initial elements of

this expansionism appeared very early on in the life of the fifth republic, but the non-specific nature of de Gaulle's method limited it to a consolidation of French links and the making of France the true champion of self determination and national independence. This will stand the Pompidou government (which often appears to be led by Debré from the defence ministry in matters of minor foreign relations) in very good stead.

The European community, until 1968 a loyal ally of France, played its full part in this process of colonial expansion. Not only did the community rope in a whole family of primary producing third world nations through the *Yaoundé Conventions*, it also became a front rank source of financial aid to under developed countries. The French, as the foremost ex-colonial power in the community, made certain that the flow of aid and the pattern of association agreements entrenched French contacts in the former empire and ex-French territories in Africa, for example, receive a privileged quota of EEC aid.

This economic intervention in, now selected, parts of the third world is intensifying. There are, in addition, over 650,000 Algerian labourers in France on current reckoning. They send back to their relatives in North Africa more than 1000 million francs a year, more than the combined earnings of Algeria from oil and natural gas. In Libya, Pompidou's "free Quebec," a whole volume of economic agreements have been concluded. Senses of proportion, needless to say, went by the board. One needs a sense of the ridiculous, instead, to accept the platitudes of Chaban-Delmas in explaining away the *Mirages* sale to the government in Tripoli. The aircraft, and there were over a hundred of them, were wanted by the Libyan government to provide a defence system guaranteeing the country's security. This was the text of the explanation given by the French prime minister on 27 January 1970 in a televised interview. He then proceeded to punch large holes in his explanation by arguing that such defences were needed for a country of such vast area and such minute population, less than 2,000,000. A country of this size could never hope to provide, independently, the ground crew and trained personnel required to utilise a large force of sophisticated aircraft. The implication is an obvious one: a considerable, and continuing, French advisory presence. Such a presence is guaranteed in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia: 95 per cent of the 45,000 French teachers working abroad, and more than 64 per cent of French technical personnel outside France, are concentrated in these three countries.

Another facet of this economic retrenchment is the imbalance emerging in French overseas trade to the detriment of the less developed nations. In her trade with countries outside the franc area, French exports only cover, on average, 85 per cent of her import bill.

On her trade with the franc area itself, that is with the former overseas territories, there is a surplus running at around 400 million francs (or more) annually. (" *Statistiques du commerce de la France.*" Résultats mensuels, July 1969. In 1967 the balance in France's favour was 289 million francs ; in 1968 it reached 670 million francs). This is remarkably similar to the situation in the sterling area that has often produced justified criticism from the raw material suppliers in Africa and Asia who kept the area in balance with the outside world much to the gratification of London. This, then, is the content of the French colonial method. But the France that is applying it is now far more purposeful. If this is chaos, as the general prophesied, then let us have order.

5. a word of history in conclusion

The themes developed in this essay relate closely to the shape of French historical patterns. The "revolutions" of 1940, 1944 and 1958, therefore, have not equalled, in historical impact, that of 1789. In so many other ways, however, France has moved away from habit. The economic innovations, alone, that have overtaken France since the war are unprecedented. Change, in other words, has harboured traditionalism. With the disappearance of de Gaulle, who more than anyone represented these twin manifestations, an air of mystery has invaded the subject. M. Pompidou is conspicuously unknown by all but the most privileged observers.

Georges Pompidou will be 60 in 1971. As a young man, apart from exhibiting a certain brilliance in classical studies, he underwent a conversion to socialism of the Javrès variety. Unlike many present Gaullists, moreover, he reacted indifferently to de Gaulle's "call" of June 1940. He continued teaching in occupied Paris. Such a secondary matter is conveniently omitted from the potted biography available to anyone calling at a French Embassy. His first open contact with de Gaulle was his appointment to a minor post after the liberation in 1944. In 1946, almost as an indication of his lack of political stature, he found himself in the middling post of a deputy to the commissioner general for tourism. He nevertheless seemed to progress via a series of steps that Alexander Werth (in "*de Gaulle*") describes as "sheer luck and personal pull." In 1954, employing this facility, he found himself as a director of the Rothschild Bank and several other business concerns.

The most fascinating chapter in this obscure history remains the years of RPF militancy in the early 1950's. This movement launched by de Gaulle in 1947 developed rapidly, collecting an impressive body of adherents. The present Defence Minister, Debré, was prominent. The present Prime Minister, Chaban-Delmas, cultivated certain clandestine contacts with the movement, preferring in the meantime to preserve the respectability reserved for a "radical" label, which he used in elections. To be blunt, the RPF could have accommodated Sir Oswald Mosely with little real effort. It depended on a heavily biased anti-communist platform, and dragged in nationalism, jingoism and anthropological debate to give its programme appeal. Personalities connected with the movement (Soustelle, Aron and Malraux amongst them), contributed to a journal called *Liberté de l'Esprit* in which they provided sociological, anthropological and political justification for anti-Russian efforts to strengthen "civilisation" against the threat from the East. In time this became a generalised rejection of submission to super power pressures from both East and West.

Pompidou's role in this Gaullist exercise is significant chiefly because it is so sheltered. According to Werth, Pompidou was actively engaged as an adviser to de Gaulle in this dubious RPF period, and even took a behind-the-scenes part in the *putsch* of May 1958. A lot of very loose ends remain, therefore, before any political assessment of the new president of the republic can be made. In a sense, one can read de Gaulle's motives into the selection of Pompidou as heir. His greatest quality was the lever of *apoliticism* he possessed. He has never sat in parliament. By rejecting the political pecking order (by ignoring, in other words, the *système* he had always detested), de Gaulle made a simple point: the presidency is not up for grabs.

The most surprising aspect of this manoeuvre, clearly, is the failure of de Gaulle to clarify the position of the president, coupled with the ambiguous

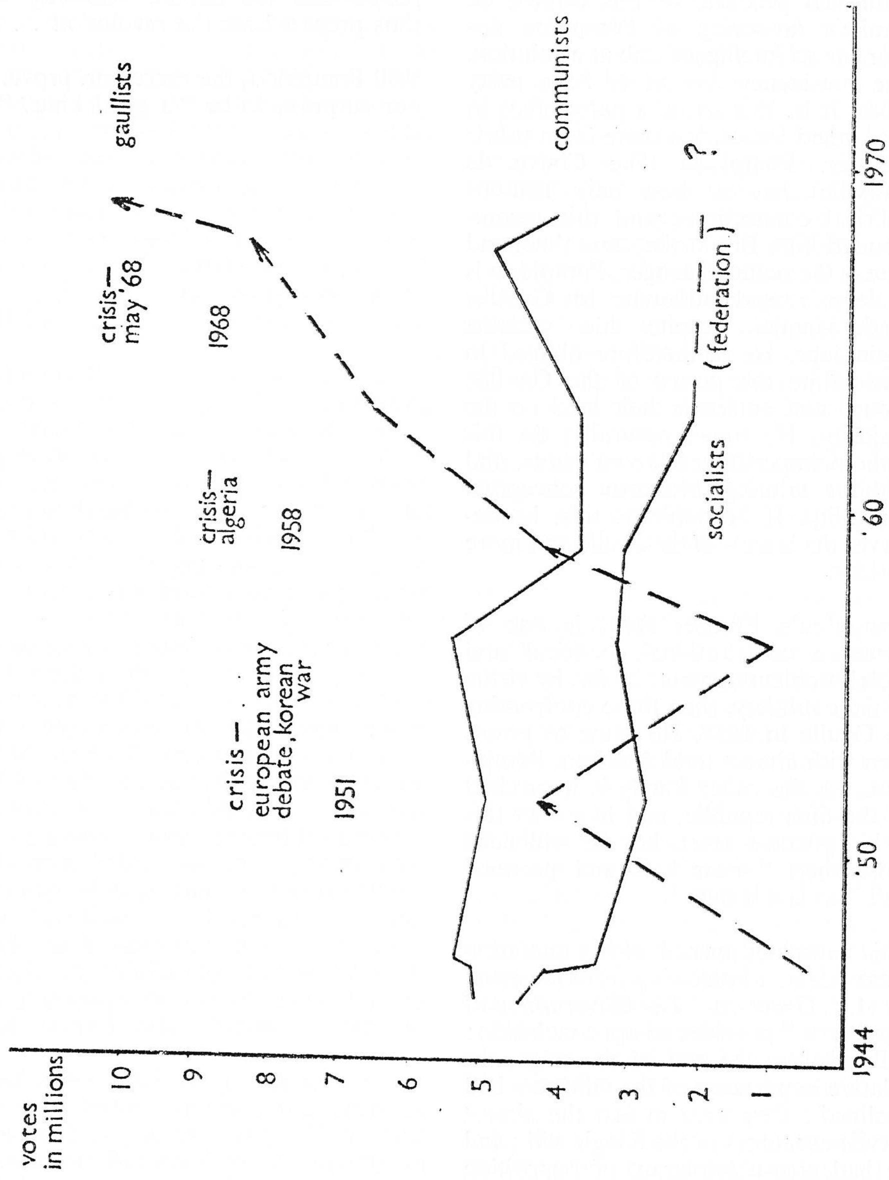
position of the prime minister. The dilemmas facing Georges Pompidou as president leave a vast area of uncertainty in the midst of French constitutional practice. In this context de Gaulle's favouring of Pompidou appears as an intelligent stab at a solution. The presidency can never be a party office. It is, in a sense, a party office in the United States, but there is no prime minister. Pompidou (like Couve de Murville) has at best only tenuous political connections, and this recommended him. But at the same time, and here is the point of danger, Pompidou is a deep rooted adherent to Gaullist fundamentals, despite his socialist beginnings. He is therefore obliged to consolidate the power of the Gaullist groups and entrench their hold on the majority. He must, naturally, do this without imperilling his own status, and without tainting his own conceptual neutrality. If he achieves this, he deserves the laurels of de Gaulle and more besides.

Pompidou's France, then, is one of immense constitutional, political and social problems, greater by far, by virtue of their subtlety, than those confronting de Gaulle in 1958. He came to power then with almost total freedom. Pompidou, on the other hand, is a product of the fifth republic, and in a way this is his greatest asset, but he will need more than "sheer luck and personal pull" to last it out.

This pamphlet opened with a quotation from Alain, a borrowing from the essay by *A. J. Grant* on "*The Government of Louis* XIV" provides an apt conclusion: "But before the end of the reign, the relative importance of the ministers had declined; they were at last the almost servile executors of the King's will; and he had grown intolerant of opposition and protest . . . the King is God's vice-regent and is possessed of a sort of divine infallibility . . ." "In his reign the monarchy ceased to be the one principle of unity in the state . . . It became something apart from the people and the nation. The way was thus prepared for the revolution . . ."

Will Pompidou, the successor, prove, to our surprise, to be "a good king?"

crisis and the radical electors 1944-1970



young fabian group

The Young Fabian Group exists to give socialists not over 30 years of age an opportunity to carry out research, discussion and propaganda. It aims to help its members publish the results of their research, and so make a more effective contribution to the work of the Labour movement. It therefore welcomes all those who have a thoughtful and radical approach to political matters.

The group is autonomous, electing its own committee. It co-operates closely with the Fabian Society which gives financial and clerical help. But the group is responsible for its own policy and activity, subject to the constitutional rule that it can have no declared political policy beyond that implied by its commitment to democratic socialism.

The group publishes pamphlets written by its members, arranges fortnightly meetings in London, and holds day and weekend schools.

Enquiries about membership should be sent to the Secretary, Young Fabian Group, 11 Dartmouth Street, London, SW1 ; telephone 01-930 3077.

the author

James Bellini is an ex-officio member of the Young Fabian Group executive committee and convener of its foreign policy study group. He read law and European history at St. John's College, Cambridge, where he graduated in 1966. He is currently completing a doctorate programme at the London School of Economics in the department of international relations: his special fields are post-war French politics and the problem of German re-unification. He is also assisting in writing a history of war correspondents.

Cover design by Jonathan Green-Armytage. Printed by Civic Press Limited (TU), Civic Street, Glasgow, C4.

SBN 7163 2021 5

recent fabian pamphlets

research series

252	Peter Mittler	The mental health services	3s
268	M. Rendel and others	Equality for women	5s
272	Ben Whitaker	Participation and poverty	2s 6d
273	Society of Labour Lawyers	Justice for all	8s
277	D. Rubinstein, C. Speakman	Leisure, transport and the countryside	4s
279	Louis Turner	Politics and the multinational company	5s
280	Society of Labour Lawyers	Occupational accidents and the law	3s
281	Roy Moore	Self management in Yugoslavia	5s
282	a Fabian group	Planning for education in 1980	5s
283	Lord Kennet	Controlling our environment	3s
284	Alf Morris	Value added tax: a tax on the consumer	3s
286	David Bull	Action for welfare rights	3s
287	Peter Draper and others	The NHS: three views	4s
288	Lord Walston	Farm gate to Brussels	6s
289	D. Bourn, N. Howard	The future of telecommunications	5s
290	Hamish Richards	The UN: an economic institution	4s

tracts

323	Richard M. Titmuss	The irresponsible society	2s 6d
331	Richard Wollheim	Socialism and culture	6s
353	Brian Abel-Smith	Freedom in the welfare state	1s 6d
374	Brigid Brophy	Religious education in state schools	3s
390	Anthony Lester	Democracy and individual rights	3s
395	Tony Lynes	Welfare rights	2s
396	Tony Lynes	Labour's pension plan	4s
397	John Hughes	The TUC: a plan for the 1970s	5s
399	R. H. S. Crossman	Paying for the social services	3s
400	Anne Lapping (ed)	Community action	6s
401	Rodney Fielding	A socialist foreign policy	4s
402	Anthony Wedgwood Benn	The new politics: a socialist reconnaissance	5s

young fabian pamphlets

11	a study group	Womanpower	5s
17	D. Atkinson and others	Students today	5s
18	Vincent Cable	Whither Kenyan emigrants?	4s
19	Anthony Osley	Free communism: a Czech experiment	5s
20	Nicholas Bosanquet	Pay, prices and Labour in power	3s

books

Bernard Shaw and others	Fabian essays (sixth edition)	cased 30s
R. H. S. Crossman and others	New Fabian Essays	cased 35s
Margaret Cole	The story of Fabian socialism	paper 15s
Brian Abel-Smith and others	Socialism and affluence	paper 12s
B. Lapping and G. Radice (eds)	More power to the people	paper 25s
Peter Townsend and others	Social services for all?	paper 15s
Peter Townsend and others	The fifth social service	paper 18s