

## FRANCE

# Afterthoughts on the French election

By Diana Johnstone

PARIS

**T**HE VOTING BOOTH IS SECRET and so are people's thoughts. But here's a wild guess about the recent French elections: Most people, including most people on the left, are more or less relieved that the left was defeated.

The *New York Times* interpreted the vote—as the U.S. press has interpreted most European elections for the past 30 years—primarily as a rejection of Communism. Actually, the right's campaign played up the red scare less than might have been expected. I suspect there were two other fears that may have been more important: *Fear of fear* of the Communists, and fear of the Socialists.

Everyone knew that the moment the left won, investment capital would flee the country by the various circuitous routes it knows best, despite government measures to dam the flow. Everyone knew the multinational corporations, starting with those based in West Germany, would retaliate with the powerful means at their disposal against the nationalizations promised in the Common Program. Everyone expected that, in the face of the resulting economic difficulties, the Government of the Left would end up calling on workers not to strike, to accept some sort of austerity, to save *their* government.

And nobody saw very clearly how the left was going to deal with the new problems its own presence in the government would trigger—problems foreseen neither in the 1972 Common Program nor in the campaign speeches of the Socialist or Communist candidates.

Since the right won, but only after being warned in the first round that half the country was against it, the workers feel free to strike to their hearts' content, the unions feel free to press their demands. Untroubled by multinational economic sabotage, President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's government may be persuaded to carry out about as many social measures as the left could have got away with.

Fear of Communism afflicted a minority who would have voted for the right in any case. Fear of fear of Communism was felt by many in the swing vote category, and also, most strongly of all perhaps, by a number of Communists themselves. It is not necessary to go hunting a "hand of Moscow" theory to explain a lack of will to win among Communists. It is enough to recall the Chilean trauma, and to sound out apprehensions that a spell of uncertain left-wing government could have given rise to disorders similar to those in Italy leading to the return in force of an authoritarian and repressive right. The Communists felt they would have been the first victims of such a disaster.

The Socialist party leaders wanted the left to win so they could get into the government. To do what? To carry out the Common Program? If, as most people evidently suspected, the Common Program was inadequate to deal with the problems France would face, then the Communist campaign, by focusing on that program and spelling out (even if in debatable terms) what it would cost, actually did everyone a service by calling the Union of the Left's bluff.

The Socialists complained that, because of the campaign led by Georges Marchais, they were attacked from the left and from the right. That's politics. The Socialists have no one to blame but themselves for their inadequacy to answer those attacks in a convincing way.

Marchais' campaign was simple and clear: The French Communist party (PCF) meant to be the champion of the economic interests of the poorest segment of the population. This is felt to be its legitimate role, and it can be argued that this straightforward line was the least likely to feed that particular fear of Communism that stems from past history of Com-



During Paris election campaign, Communists hold an informal neighborhood meeting.

munists under-handedly pretending to be something they are not, in order to sneak into power on false pretenses and then turn around. Of course, the fear and hostility of big capital to Communists is permanent. But although it is impossible to measure such things, it seemed that fear of Communism in the general population was minimal.

It was the Socialists whose intentions

were unclear. Did they want to carry out the Common Program or didn't they? And if not, what did they have in mind? It is this uncertainty about the real intentions of people who want to get into power that breeds uneasiness.

Very many people who sociologically should have been in the Socialist party (PS) constituency—salaried or professional middle class people with left-wing con-

victions—regarded the PS with intense distrust. Such people did not identify with the PCF and would not vote for it, while regarding it as a legitimate and familiar feature of the political scene, annoying perhaps in its rigidity, but not dangerous.

But they suspected the Socialists of two grave and related sins: opportunism and technocracy. They suspected the PS of being the eager vehicle of a social project based on technical efficiency and manipulation that would, insofar as it succeeded, stunt the growth of genuine new popular movements for social change.

But they also suspected that the Socialists were ready to bite off more than they could chew, and that their term in office could lead to reaction.

It is probable that many such people either did not vote or ended up voting for centrist candidates.

A victory of the left could have led to a period of conflicts over issues that many people consider outdated, irrelevant to the real problems of the '70s. People do not want to risk civil war for nationalizations they doubt would solve anything. The defeat of the left may allow the issues to become clearer and open the way for a fresh period of new and more authentic social struggles.

## CENTRAL AMERICA

## Honduran troops aiding Somoza

By Blase Bonpane

In mid-March, Honduras sent troops into Nicaragua at "the request of the Nicaraguan government." The troops were requested to put down the very successful FSLN (Sandino National Front), an anti-Somoza army of Nicaraguan patriots.

The military action, which is called *Operation Veloz* (Operation Speed), is under the auspices of the Central American Defense Council (CONDECA), consisting of the defense ministers of five Central American states allied for joint military actions.

CONDECA was established in 1961. Military leaders of Nicaragua and Guatemala, with U.S. encouragement, organized a conference last July of Central American armed forces. The conference produced a joint petition urging the governments to create a defense council and intelligence service for counteracting "subversive communist agents who infiltrate the area."

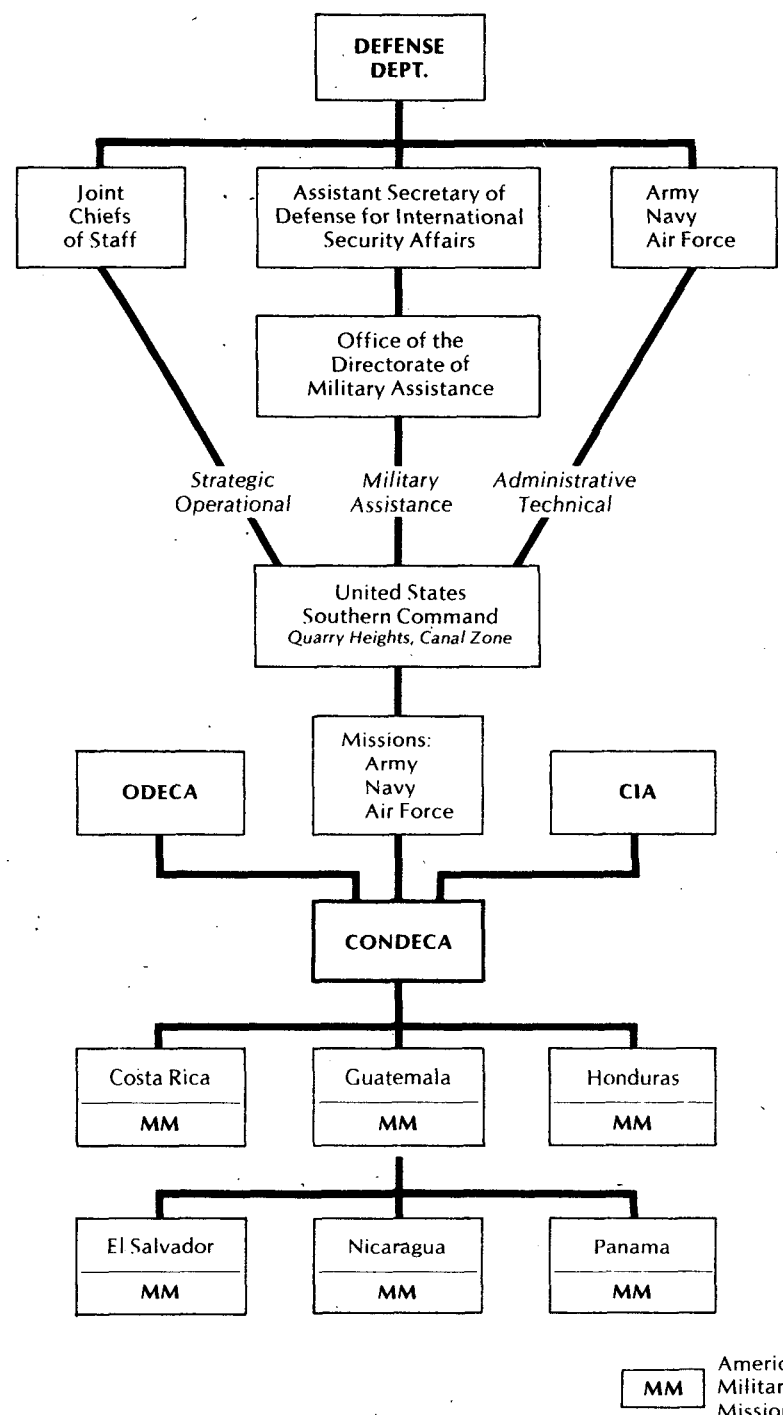
The U.S. Southern Command, based in the Canal Zone, played an important role in ensuring cooperation among the nations, which had always feared each other. Under American supervision, joint maneuvers were carried out in Honduras during August and September 1962. And CONDECA was given the role of defending the Isthmus from Cuban invasion and subversive infiltration.

In case of "internal subversion," each national army was to be initially responsible for its own rebellions. If it failed, it would receive reinforcements from other nations, as long as they were not threatened by similar dangers. This is what lay behind the entry of Honduran troops into Nicaragua.

In addition to the U.S. role in CONDECA's intervention, there have been other reports of U.S. involvement. Nicaraguans report the arrival of thousands of bayonets as part of a U.S. aid package. Last week, 6,000 new M-16 rifles and six million rounds of ammunition are supposed to have arrived.

Blase Bonpane was a Maryknoll priest in Nicaragua. He is now professor of political science at California State University, Northridge.

## CONDECA AND THE AMERICAN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT



This chart is adapted from an Office of the Secretary of Defense chart. (ODECA is the Organization of Central American States.)



## EUROPE

# Court imperils a Danish free city



A house was made out of a boat hull.

By John Lamperti

ON JAN. 18 THE DANISH Supreme Court began hearing the case of Ministry of Defense vs. the "free city" of Christiania, and on Feb. 2 the court announced its decision against the free town. If the Ministry and the Copenhagen city government have their way, that's the beginning of the end for this unique community in Christianshavn that recently celebrated its sixth birthday. But the 1,000-plus Christianites, together with thousands of friends and supporters, are determined to fight for Christiania's future.

## An official social experiment.

It began in 1971. The Danish military had at last completely abandoned its Boat-swain's Street barracks occupying a 45-acre site near the harbor, including parts of Copenhagen's 17th century walls and moat. The area contained some park-like forests and fields together with over 100 old but substantial buildings, all surrounded by fences. Residents of densely-populated nearby streets had already broken through one fence to open a field for a children's play ground; the authorities decided to accept this.

In October, 30 or so young people—some of them refugees from slum-clearance projects elsewhere in the city—started to squat in the former barracks. A local underground newspaper spread the word, urging readers to "emigrate by bus no. 8" to the new land. By year's end 300-400 people were living on the former base, and the free city was well on its way.

The government's reaction was cautious. Social Democrats were in power, times were good and there was no immediate plan for the area. By spring 1972 Christiania's negotiating group and the Danish government reached a preliminary ten point agreement that officially recognized Christiania's existence.

One year later a "treaty" was completed: Christiania could exist for at least three years more as a "social experiment," while its citizens were to pay 50 kroner each (about \$8) per month for city water and electricity. During this period there would be an official planning competition open to anyone wanting to submit ideas for the future use of the region. Only thereafter could the evacuation of the free town be ordered.

Aided by this limited degree of security, Christiania developed into a remarkable community that often contrasted strongly with the conventional society around it. The Christianites were a heterogeneous group holding no formal political or religious belief in common. The community was organized through a system of regional and community-wide town meetings, as well as its many work and living collectives.

Own what you use.

A woman I met during my visit told me there were two main things to remember about Christiania. First, a person can "own" only what he or she personally uses; for example, take over

a building and rent out space in it. And second, everyone has a chance to develop new or dormant skills and talents and put them to use. An exaggeration, perhaps, but lots of things are going on, from a large "flea market" that sold cheaply all sorts of useable junk—and also supplies elegant refinished farm furniture to the outside society at respectable prices—to a nearby carpenter shop that made simple but sturdy tables and chairs, as well as some luxury items for sale outside. Musicians and artists flourished and their work was valued both in and out of Christiania.

The present-day Christianites are a varied group. Some live in Christiania but work at jobs outside, while others, perhaps 200-300, work in Christiania itself. There are students on scholarships. There are nuclear families with kids, single adults, and communes and collectives of many sizes. There are people on welfare—more today, in a time of high unemployment, than formerly.

Christiania has always harbored a number of "social losers"—people unable to cope with conventional modern life, many of whom would be institutionalized outside. Here they are tolerated and sometimes helped; they can live independently. The losers include alcoholics, people who are retarded, weak or just a bit crazy, and also some drug addicts and small-time criminals.

The Copenhagen police contend that Christiania is a source of crime. The evidence doesn't bear this out. There are few authenticated cases of crimes committed by Christianites outside the free town, while many of the problems in Christiania itself are caused by the numerous outsiders who drift in and out daily. Small-time criminals do come to Christiania and live there; often they are youths with juvenile records. Sometimes such people live quite poorly in Christiania.

But in case after case, according to a government report, they do not continue to commit crimes.

According to Copenhagen University criminologist Flemming Balvig; "Christiania has had a regulating and damping effect on criminality in Copenhagen," and it is now "the most important research area for criminal policy" in Denmark.

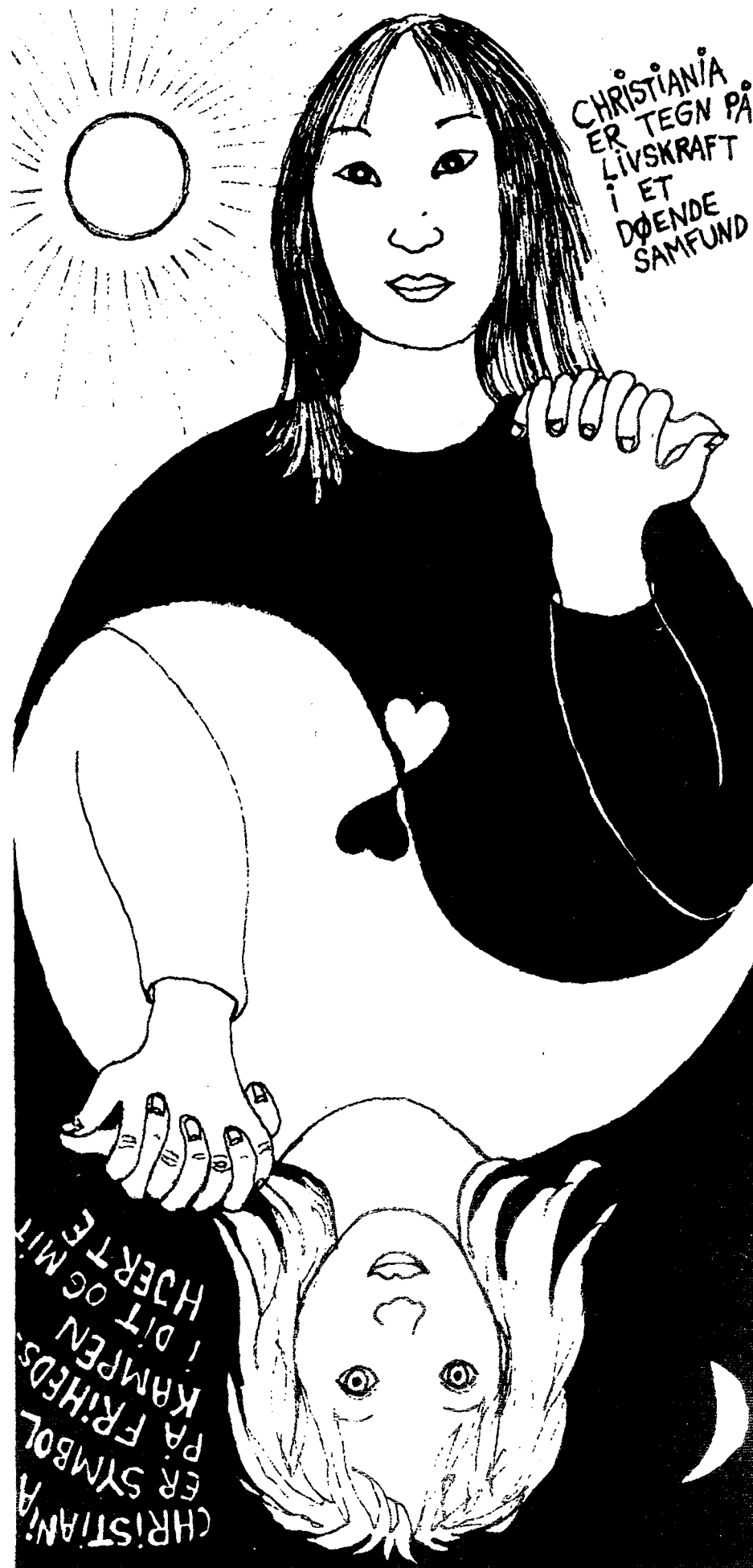
## Bicentennial Indians.

Even a brief description of Christiania must mention the theater group Solvogren (The Sun's Chariot), one of the most imaginative to be found anywhere. Most of its members live in Christiania, and they stage productions both there (in a huge former riding academy) and in the streets of Copenhagen. Sometimes they go even further afield. The hills of Rebild, in the Jutland peninsula, are traditionally the site of American Fourth of July celebrations. For the 1976 American Bicentennial a spectacular event was planned, with speeches by Queen Margaret and the American ambassador and international TV coverage.

In this festivity certain groups of Americans were forgotten—until a band of mounted Indians rode over the hilltop just as the Queen began to speak. Some spectators thought them part of the planned program until the police began a vicious and quite unnecessary attack. The "Indians," of course, were Solvogren.

Copenhagen still talks of the "Santa Claus army" that invaded it in December 1974. Starting as naive, traditional Santa Clauses, the army (all from Solvogren) became more political day by day as they experienced the corruption of Christmas by greed and capitalism. They ended their week's visit by giving away books from the shelves of several department stores to startled but happy customers, until the police arrived to haul them off.

Last year, it was "The animals go into



The cover of a pamphlet put out by Christianites.

action!" From a leaflet: "A great outbreak of different animals will be the framework for a series of actions. From the 16 to the 22 of December the animals will go into battle against the worst sources of pollution and the worst examples of housing profiteering." This was Solvogren again, with a little help from friends.

## Last-ditch resistance.

Despite all this, or because of it, Christiania has powerful enemies both in and out of government. Before the three-year period of recognition expired on April 1, 1976, Parliament had voted to evacuate Christiania and destroy many of its buildings.

As April 1 approached, the Christianites did not fade away as was hoped; instead they prepared for militant non-violent defense of their homes and community. When the crucial day arrived friends and supporters assembled to help—nearly 30,000 strong! The government wisely backed away from a confrontation of this magnitude and postponed the eviction order. The possible battle then turned into a happy demonstration and march through the city, followed by a festival to which all were invited.

The Eastern District Court found last February that the Defense Ministry does have authority to order the evacuation. (The judges went on to recognize Christiania's social value and to doubt the wisdom of taking such an action, but that part of the ruling is not binding on the government.) The Christianites decided

at a stormy town meeting to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court. The negative decision there on Feb. 2 was not a surprise, but the appeal process at least provided another year's respite.

Some further delay is certain, and Christiania has again been mobilizing for defense. The adverse court ruling returns the problem to the political arena and many Christianites hope to win their fight there. The press and TV has become much more positive toward the free town than they were at first, and polls show that public opinion has also changed for the better.

But a last-ditch resistance is being organized too, in case it is needed—or to help deter a violent attack. If a forcible eviction is ordered, the police (and possibly soldiers) will face not the 1,000 Christianites alone, but many thousands of their allies, both Danish and foreign, organized for resistance that could resemble but surpass May Day in Washington, D.C., in 1971.

Friends of Christiania have formed a support organization. Inquiries and contributions from abroad are welcome and needed; books, records, cards and posters are also available. Write to: Stot Christiania, Dronningensgade 14, 1420 København K, Denmark.

John Lamperti lives in Norwich, Vt., and teaches mathematics at Dartmouth College; in 1972-73 he was a visiting professor in Aarhus, Denmark. Together with his son Matthew Lamperti, he lived in Christiania for six weeks during the summer of 1977.