

France: A Third Force?

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PARIS
GENERAL DE GAULLE has recently strengthened the main anti-Communist, anti-Popular Front wing of the Left opposition here just when it most needed strengthening. This achievement was strikingly underscored by the outcome of a special national congress of the French Socialist Party.

The congress, which opened February 1, the day after de Gaulle's press conference announcing French recognition of Communist China, was the nearest thing France has yet seen to an American primary convention. Its avowed purpose was to decide whether the party should endorse the unorthodox "candidacy for the candidacy"—as the Socialist national secretary, Guy Mollet, put it—of Gaston Defferre, the popular Socialist mayor of Marseilles. Earlier, Defferre had announced his intention to run against de Gaulle without waiting for his party's approval. There was never much doubt about what the formal decision would be; the real issue was whether Mollet would succeed in bringing the congress to impose conditions on the candidate that would make him in effect the prisoner of the party machine, controlled by Mollet, and ultimately of the Popular Front with the Communists toward which Mollet has been steering.

WHEN Defferre spoke before his party comrades, he seemed very sure of himself. He would withdraw his candidacy if disavowed by his brother Socialists, he said, but he would not agree to run as the Socialist candidate. He would win or lose under the banner of Horizon '80, his version of the New Frontier. He would make no deals with the Communists; he would not let his hands be tied by any doctrinaire program.

While Defferre criticized the methods of "so-called direct democracy" practiced by the present

incumbent of the Elysée, he made it clear that if elected he would respect the basic framework of the Gaullist constitution as adopted by the country in 1958 and then amended, to establish direct election of the president, in 1962. He was considerably vaguer than he had been earlier about the need for minor constitutional reform to limit the presidential powers. In fact, he sounded almost as authoritarian as de Gaulle in his determination to uphold the essential presidential prerogatives. He firmly rejected the key demand of the Popular Front advocates for an unqualified condemnation of the French independent nuclear deterrent—his personal preference is for a European one, but he indicated serious doubts as



to its feasibility. At the close of the session he ostentatiously refrained from joining in the anachronistic Socialist rite of singing "The Internationale."

Despite vicious back-room attacks on him as a crypto-Gaullist or just plain Gaullist, Defferre finally won from the congress a unanimous resolution approving his candidacy. Important in itself, Defferre's success is even more encouraging as a symptom of an underlying national consensus. De Gaulle was justified in boasting at his press conference that after the bitter dissensions of recent years the French nation was finally "at peace with itself." Prominent among the factors that have rallied opinion behind major Gaullist policies are the general's tough, ultimately successful stand at Brussels on the issue of opening the European Common Market to French farm produce, and his recognition of

China in spectacular defiance of the policy the United States has sought to impose on its allies.

China and French Opinion

De Gaulle's China policy, along with his European policy and his quasi-monarchical fashion of governing the nation, does not escape criticism here. But as the public reaction to his last press conference demonstrated, reservations about de Gaulle's leadership are widely entertained but weakly felt; violent disapproval seems confined to an irreducible core of extremists on the Right and the Left.

"De Gaulle's comments on the role of the president in relation to parliament and to the premier constitute the most shocking apology for absolutism I have ever heard," a left-wing friend said to me a few days after the conference, which he had followed on television. Having thus got his sense of shock on the record in a little under ten seconds, he lectured me for the next half hour on how admirably the general had understood the deep longing of the French masses for real national independence and their belief that only a neutralist policy could restore peace in Southeast Asia.

Right-wing acquaintances had different objections but seemed to give them no more weight. Some deplored de Gaulle's nationalistic approach to the problem of building Europe, but they were obviously filled with pride at France's resurgence as a presence, if not a power, in Asia ten years after Dienbienphu. Others, regardless of political orientation, regretted that de Gaulle had found it necessary to wound American sentiment so deeply. The few who did disapprove of his China and Asia policies were so impressed by the elegant style in which he had expressed them, particularly in his *belle page d'anthologie* on China, that it was

hard to take their disapproval seriously. "*Très homme d'état*" was a particularly frequent appreciation, applying both to the substance of de Gaulle's statements and to the manner of their delivery.

Though de Gaulle's press conference revealed him at peak intellectual and physical form, it was less statesmanlike than several of his previous appearances. True, it was nobly free from pettiness or rancor, almost without trace of that delusion of infallibility which has undone so many great captains of the past. But for once his words lacked the deep feeling for human values and what might be termed the sense of moral history that marks his utterances when he is at his best. The *realpolitik* inspiring the China policy showed through a little too nakedly. The influence of de Gaulle's harsher masters or models—Machiavelli, Richelieu, Bismarck, Charles Maurras—seemed too preponderant. Moreover, the evident element of risk in the China policy and the proposals for neutralizing Southeast Asia seemed more suggestive of a gambler's move than of the prudent statesmanship de Gaulle has usually displayed.

The Memory of Yalta

Probably the greatest single factor underlying de Gaulle's psychological success is his ability to exploit the present almost world-wide questioning of American leadership, and the resentments aroused by the methods with which we frequently seek to impose our leadership upon reluctant allies or neutrals. As the greatest world power and the necessary protector of many lesser powers, we could hardly fail to irritate some national susceptibilities even if our diplomacy were always sound and adroit. Ever since the Suez affair in 1956, there has been a growing feeling among many of our allies that we do fail to give proper heed to their counsels or take adequate account of their national interests.

This European dissatisfaction with American leadership has been sharpened by Europe's increasing strength and self-confidence. "The United States," says the Radical Socialist leader Maurice Faure, one of our most faithful friends in France, "must learn to draw the necessary

conclusions from the recovery of the European nations and give up unilaterally imposing its own policies on them after usually perfunctory consultation." Faure voiced qualified approval of de Gaulle's decision to recognize the Peking régime.

Defferre criticized the methods of Gaullist foreign policy but explicitly endorsed its broad objectives: "We should say to them [the U.S.] cordially but firmly," he declared, "'You want to lower tariff barriers, extend the Common Market to the Atlantic Community; agreed. But we are not ready yet. Give us time to create Europe, to develop an economy and to build up enterprises on the same scale as your own.' And we should not even hesitate to tell them, 'We don't want to run the risk of being colonized by you; it's neither in your interest nor in ours.'"

Defferre is by no means the only non-Gaullist Frenchman (if he is non-Gaullist), or for that matter European, whose doubts about U.S. leadership have been intensified by the New Frontier policy of opposing the tightly knit six-power Europe that we once favored, and of seeking instead, as Raymond Cartier charges in a recent issue of *Match* magazine, to re-Balkanize Europe. There has also been widespread concern over our Soviet policy. The effort to reduce international tensions by negotiating with the Soviet Union, thus lessening the risk of nuclear war, is widely approved. But when the suspicion grows—as it has grown—that we are negotiating behind the backs of our allies, the approval diminishes.

The Gaullist bugbear of a new Yalta worries many Europeans who do not necessarily agree with de Gaulle's tactics for averting the danger. And Europeans revolt when they see the leader of the free world pursuing an almost neutralist policy in Central or Eastern Europe, thereby allowing its strongest adversary to consolidate his shakiest positions, while focusing its own militant energies upon containing the weaker adversary in Asia. Naturally, the opposite strategy proposed by de Gaulle wins some sympathy, even among those who recognize the enormous risks inherent in it.

Five years ago de Gaulle him-

self held a position on the issue seemingly not greatly different from Washington's present one. In his press conference of November, 1959, already foreseeing the Sino-Soviet split, he urged Russia to take its historic place in the ranks of the Occident in view of the long-term menace from "China's yellow multitudes," who, he warned, were laying the foundations of power while "eyeing the surrounding spaces they will one day have to spill out to fill." Admirers of his statesmanship feel that the implicit contradiction between this view and his present policies in Asia is more nominal than substantive. Russia, they point out, is still a long way from aligning itself with the Occident, and China is now too strong to be successfully contained without Soviet help. It is better, therefore, to abandon containment and instead exploit the split between the two Communist powers.

IN HIS press conference, de Gaulle simultaneously played on Russian concern over that "longest frontier" from Vladivostok to the Hindu Kush and on Asian resentment at earlier Soviet hopes of "keeping China under its [Russia's] sway and through her dominating Asia." De Gaulle also took pains, while flattering the national pride of the present rulers of the "state older than history," to warn his listeners in less developed lands what ruthless dictatorship had cost the Chinese people in terms of human suffering. He encouraged the jealous passion for national independence which is particularly strong in submerged or recently emerging nations by setting them an example. "By promoting the cause of nations," explains the semi-official Gaullist organ *La Nation*, "one splits up the imperialisms."

It is not altogether clear whether in the Gaullist view a defensive coalition of nations like NATO, led by its strongest member, is an "imperialism," but by ostentatiously asserting France's independence of its senior ally, the Gaullists believe they are fostering a similar thirst for independence among all the satellites of the two Communist imperialisms. They even believe that the Gaullist brand of nationalism

will prove an effective antidote to the poisons of both Chinese and Soviet subversion in the undeveloped countries.

Sound or fallacious, this politico-ideological strategy, which de Gaulle unveiled more fully than ever before at his press conference, has a

certain grandiose sweep—one of the elements of his statesmanship—that both fascinates and disturbs Europeans. But it is clear that this strategy also implies an almost permanent opposition to American policy in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. «»

Vietnam: The Awful Choice

DENIS WARNER

SAIGON
GENERAL NGUYEN KHANH has the air of a hard-working, intelligent man in a great hurry to get where he is going. Vietnamese soldiers, who are not noted for their discipline, snap to attention when the new premier passes. Whatever his motives may have been in late January, when he overthrew those whom he himself had helped overthrow Ngo Dinh Diem in November, he is clearly aware of the risks and of the necessity now to guard his own flanks against another lightning coup. And he reveals an acute understanding of the fact that victory in the war against the Vietcong will never be won by military means alone but depends primarily on the success of the government's efforts to meet the social and economic needs of the peasants.

These are positive factors in the new situation in South Vietnam, where unified leadership is the most desperate need. Yet in both the political and military fields, Khanh's coup and the circumstances that occasioned it add grave new complications to the U.S. policy dilemma.

By the assassination of President Diem last November, the coup leaders sowed a harvest of lawlessness that South Vietnam may have only just begun to reap. To have compelled Diem to abdicate might have opened the way for constitutional changes and reforms. But the moment orders were given for the assassination, constitutional methods were forgotten and jungle law prevailed. That Khanh again chose extralegal methods to come to the top has made it all the more difficult, despite his own ability and dynamism, to

capture the imagination of the Vietnamese people and to convey his own sense of the urgent need for national unity. Many of the same people who had regarded the removal of the Ngo family as a dramatic step forward looked on Khanh's coup as a lamentable step backward.

ALTHOUGH General Quong Van Minh, the leader of the first coup, agreed reluctantly to stay on as head of state, he did nothing to correct the impression that he was a figurehead retained to give some semblance of continuity to the new changes made at pistol point. His appearance with Khanh at the Xa Loi pagoda during a fair in aid of lepers and at a ceremony to release Binh Xuyen prisoners jailed a decade ago by Diem fooled no one. Even on the steps of the Presidency, where he stood in unpressed trousers, a silk scarf knotted at his neck, to listen to Khanh announce the formation of the new government, he seemed bored. Khanh, in his trim jungle greens, was obviously the boss.

Political doubts about the new régime crystallized when Khanh tried to form a government under civilian leadership. "Why should I run the risk of spending three months in office only to spend the next three years in jail?" asked one potential candidate. "I don't mind working for the government as a civil servant, but I don't want any part of policymaking in this military régime," said another.

In response to a request from Khanh, Dr. Nguyen Ton Hoan, who had fled the country nine years ago after setting up his own anti-Diem

maquis near the North Vietnamese border, returned from Paris to form a government—and failed. Hoan ran headlong into problems that plague the political scene here. Buddhists who had been granted sanctuary in the United States embassy took the lead of a neutralist anti-American faction united for protection against Hoan, a Catholic. Hoan's own followers split into four bickering groups, and Khanh finally had to become premier himself.

This may result in more things being done more quickly, but it is not calculated to enhance Khanh's public image and there are many ingredients for future trouble. In fact, Saigon's rumor mills are already grinding out speculations about the next coup and who may lead it.

The new fifty-three-member military junta has its full share of ambitious men. One is General Tran Thien Khiem, now defense minister, whose troops played a principal part in protecting Diem from the abortive coup in 1960, then in deposing Diem last November, and finally in Khanh's January 30 operation. General Duong Van Duc, the former ambassador to Korea, who has been living in self-imposed exile in Europe, is another man to watch. Duc is credited with having shot Major Nhung, Diem's assassin. And it was at his orders that Premier Nguyen Nguc Tho was roughly handled and even tied up during the January coup. Duc is both tough and ambitious.

In another category, but potentially no less dangerous to the future of the régime, are the new junta's four Dai Viet generals, who command a political following of about fifty colonels and majors. "If Khanh fails to restore unity within the armed forces, nothing is more certain than that he will be overthrown," said a Vietnamese publisher. "Yet if Khanh loses, we are all lost," said a senior civil servant. "We've had all the coups we can afford."

Positive Thinking

Given Khanh's organizing ability and a situation in the countryside even remotely similar to that described by the American military command, the thirty-seven-year-old general's chances of pulling himself and South Vietnam through might