

I N T E R N A L I N F O R M A T I O N B U L L E T I N

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REPORT ON FRANCE AND THE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH MOVEMENT

by Mary-Alice Waters

To the YSA National Committee Plenum

July 5, 1968

The complexities of an international report at this particular conjuncture, even limited to the youth arena, are considerable. It would be more correct to call this a report on France. On the other hand, despite everything going on in other parts of the world, for the last two months France has been the focal point of a world revolutionary process.

The May-June developments there were foreshadowed in the document passed by the Fourth International in 1963 on the dynamics of the world revolution. It pointed out that the three different sectors of the world revolution -- in the advanced capitalist countries, the colonial world and the workers states -- were very closely interrelated and the events in one had fast repercussions on the others. What we've seen in the last period has been a realization of this basic thesis.

I'm not going to give an eye-witness report since most of you have read the basic material put out on France. What I want to do is take three or four basic questions of central importance in our work to construct a revolutionary Marxist youth organization in the United States and discuss these in the light of the French events.

The Current Conjuncture

According to Joe Hansen, who returned from Europe after me, there's general agreement amongst our comrades that France is entering a political ebb in the upsurge that took place in May and June. That began from the time de Gaulle announced the elections on May 30th and the immediate acceptance of that offer of elections by the French Communist Party. They think it unlikely that there will be a resumption of revolutionary struggle before the late fall. Now they're beginning to enter the summer, the schools are no longer in session, or will soon close for the summer. Revolution or no revolution, vacations are coming and in August everybody takes their vacation without fail.

By the time October and November comes around, however, the effects of inflation and price rises that are already beginning will be taking their toll from the sizeable economic gains the French workers were successful in winning. These should provide an impetus for a resumption of the workers' struggles. The French workers have not suffered any crushing defeat. On the contrary, they have won significant economic gains and concessions from the de Gaulle government.

They still feel the tremendous power they have in their hands exhibited in totally closing down the French economy. So an early

renewal of the struggle is not at all precluded.

Simultaneous with the ebb in the mass revolutionary upsurge is a counter-current which is taking place amongst the most conscious elements of the revolutionary vanguard which developed during May and June. Its size is estimated to be anywhere from 15,000 to 35,000 in the Paris area alone. For the rest of the country, this would be doubled. This revolutionary vanguard is roughly oriented along our political line on some basic questions. They agree on an understanding of what happened in France in May and June and why, on the Cuban Revolution, the Vietnam war, China, and particularly on the role of the Stalinist leadership in France during the last two months.

Within this revolutionary vanguard, there's disappointment but much less demoralization because they understand a bit more thoroughly what happened and what a fantastic historical opportunity was missed. They now are inclined to step back, discuss the issues, and draw the lessons from these last two months of experience.

Our comrades have a mass audience for their ideas today in France and there are tremendous propaganda openings. The real challenge is to be able to consolidate the gains made during May and June. This is the real key to the work of our comrades in France in the coming period.

Their activity is somewhat crippled by the repression that has come down on the movement and the difficulties of functioning when the organizations themselves have been banned and formally dissolved. Some of the leading comrades have had to be careful about their movements for a period. It's also very difficult to publish and distribute literature and ways and means have to be found for doing this by extraordinary measures. However, the French comrades have mapped out a series of legal moves to fight this repression and challenge the legality of the bans on different levels.

For instance, it remains unclear whether the papers of the victimized groups are also legally banned or whether they can still be printed and distributed. This is only one point to be tested out. Their strategy is to push every angle and every opportunity they can to fight to relegalize the PCI and the JCR so they can function openly without the additional problems created by semi-legality.

Now let me take up several questions of basic importance in our struggle to build the revolutionary Marxist youth group in the United States.

The Nature of the Youth Radicalization

First, what do the French events tell us that is new and different about the nature of this international youth radicalization? Not much that is startling. Basically they confirm what we've been saying for some time. But they do enable us to spell out our positions and perspectives precisely and make them clearer to others outside our ranks.

Our generation of youth has grown up in a time that, though technically a period of peace, has been one of the most violent epochs in the history of humanity. We've lived our entire lives under the constant threat of war in one form or another -- either nuclear war or the so-called localized wars in Korea, Algeria, Vietnam, the Congo, Santo Domingo which are in reality internationalized conflicts.

Also, there's probably not been a single year in our lives when a revolutionary situation has not developed in one country or another. Most of these have not been successful. We have been most inspired by the victories in Cuba and Vietnam.

Our generation has also been much affected by the Hungarian revolution in 1956 and the Khrushchev revelations. We have not gone through the disillusionment of seeing the Russian revolution degenerate. We came on the scene after that took place and it was easier for us to view and analyze it objectively.

Within the United States our outlook on American society has been shaped by the growing militancy of the Afro-American struggle and the obvious inability of U.S. capitalism to meet the needs of the black population. These things that have affected us most directly are the same that have shaped the political consciousness of our entire generation internationally.

Of course, there have been variant influences at work in different countries. In France it would be the Algerian war, and so forth. But the same basic events have shaped the political consciousness of this entire generation of youth on an international scale. The radicalization beginning with the student youth is characterized by three fundamental features. First, it's anti-authoritarian, a revolt against the authority of the older generations on the premise that we can't possibly do worse than the older generations have done and we might well be able to do much better. The logic of this struggle against authoritarianism goes in a thorough-going anti-capitalist and anti-bureaucratic direction.

It may still leave people up in the air about what sort of tactics to employ. But our fight to control our own lives and future, to think for ourselves, leads to a head-on confrontation in our society with the capitalist rulers and in the deformed workers states with the bureaucratic leaders.

Rejection of Stalinism and Social Democracy

Second, this radicalization tends to bypass Social Democracy and Stalinism which, in the minds of our generation, are much too closely associated with or integrated into the state authorities we are combatting. Bound up with this reaction are inclinations to improvisation and experimentation in theory and practice, to seek short-cuts away and apart from classical Marxism and Bolshevism. In France this is true of the entire youth vanguard, and particularly the students. Today in France there are tens of thousands of students in fundamental agreement with us on the reformist nature of Stalinism and Social Democracy and understand the treacherous role that Stalinism played. The basic inclination to reject Stalinism was there before these events and a very large section of the student vanguard had already done so.

But, as they went through the experiences during May and June, seeing the role that the Communist Party was playing, being attacked day after day by the Stalinist leadership for holding revolutionary views, for trying to reach out to other sections of the population, being the butt of slanderous attacks such as being agents of the OAS or the CIA, splitters of the working class, and so forth. Then seeing their own organizations banned and leaders arrested without a single word of protest from the Communist Party.

These are the kinds of experiences this massive vanguard went through in France in the last few months which confirms and makes much more firm their rejection of Stalinism. Among the youth vanguard there's no question that the influence of the Communist Party has been reduced to an all-time low by their own actions in isolating themselves from the youth. They really made no attempt to move to the left and gain the leadership of these radicalizing students. They simply cut themselves off from them.

This is a world-wide phenomenon. There's no country in the world where the influence of the Communist Party is on the upswing amongst the youth vanguard. I can't think of a single one. The global influence of the Communist Party over our generation of youth is waning fast.

At the same time it's important to keep in mind that this rejection of Stalinism is not a rejection of Communism as such. This is symbolized clearly in France by the thousands of red flags that flew from every citadel where the students or workers could possibly put them and the strains of the Internationale became a song heard even in the subways of Paris during the last months in May.

Rebirth of Internationalism

Third, this radicalization is characterized by a genuine rebirth of the spirit of internationalism. This generation of youth is much more close-knit because of the advantages of instantaneous communication around the world. When the barricades go

up in the streets of Paris, the students in New York and Berkeley know about this within a few hours. The lessons of the struggle in one country spread to another with tremendous rapidity. The first barricades went up in Berlin and Western Germany during the demonstrations after the shooting of Rudi Dutschke. Within a month they reached a qualitatively higher stage in the streets of Paris and within two months barricades were going up all the way from Zurich, Switzerland to Berkeley in this country.

This is just one example of the rapid spread of ideas and methods of action from one country to another. This spirit of international solidarity and emulation is expressed in many other ways. Probably the best expression in France was the response of the students to the attacks against Cohn-Bendit. The bourgeois press openly was calling him "The German Jew" and the Communist press was leaving off the Jew and just calling him "the German." Students by the thousands in their demonstrations chanted, "We are all German Jews" and "we don't give a damn about the frontiers."

These chants were taken up by thousands and thousands in Paris where students came from all over Europe to be on the scene and on the barricades with the French students. Thus the genuine spirit of internationalism that was smothered for so many years by the national chauvinism of Stalinism and socialist reformism is being reborn in a spontaneous, but very deep fashion with our generation. This is one of the most revolutionary characteristics of the current radicalization. The fundamentally anti-capitalist and anti-bureaucratic character, the tendency to bypass Stalinism and Social Democracy, and the rebirth of internationalism are the most important political features of the radicalization, though others could be mentioned if I had the time.

The second question that I want to deal with is the relationship between the student and working class youth. What is the role of the revolutionary Marxist youth organization in connecting the two layers? The most widely discussed point of the French events in this respect has been the role of student youth as a catalyst or detonator of wider social struggles. We should take this a little further and examine exactly what it means.

The Role of the JCR

The role of the JCR in France can be divided into three basic categories: their organizational role, their role in action, and their role in education.

Here is what the JCR did during the two year period of preparation. First, they conducted their struggle within the Communist Party on a political basis around the issues of Vietnam, Cuba, support to capitalist candidates, and so forth. After the split from the CP, they played a vanguard role in building the actions against the Vietnam war in solidarity with the Vietnamese revolution, in solidarity with the Cuban revolution, in solidarity with the Latin American revolution in general.

They also established ties with youth organizations on an international scale, all the way from the SDS in Germany to the YSA in the United States, the YS/LJS in Canada, and many others. They were very conscious of their role in the international youth movement and what they could do to guide, organize and lead it politically.

On the level of education, they carried out a patient, consistent propaganda campaign in student circles. Day after day, month after month, they concentrated on the basic political issues facing the student youth not only in France but in other countries. Primarily, and probably most importantly, they stressed the need for organization and secondly the need for having a perspective towards the working class and the socialist struggle for power.

Through this activity they were able to lay the basis for becoming the conscious, organized revolutionary spokesmen for their generation so that when the tremendous upsurge came, they were able to capitalize on it and go forward from there. They also served as a transmission belt for the most conscious elements among this revolutionary youth to enter the revolutionary party in France. This took place in the two year period between the time the JCR split from the Communist Party in the spring of 1966 and the spring of 1968.

So when this tremendous revolutionary upsurge began, the JCR was able to be in the center of the action from the opening shots. They were not the sole organization on the scene. They did not have hegemony. No organization really had hegemony. But both as an organization and as individual leaders they did emerge as the leadership of the real revolutionary wing of the students as well as sections of the young workers. This came about because of the correctness of their political line, which corresponded to the needs of the situation, and because they were able to utilize their key position as a revolutionary youth organization correctly.

They understood that, while striving to build a revolutionary alternative for the working youth and orienting the youth who they were leading in that direction, they had to provide the leadership for these revolutionary students and direct them towards the young workers. They understood that they had to stay with the student vanguard they were leading and go through a lot of these actions with them whether or not in some cases they agreed completely with everything that was being done. They stayed with the struggle all the way and at all turns and twists and they provided the leadership for it.

Most graphic is the contrast between the role of our comrades and of the Lambertists, the fraternal organization to Healy in England and Wohforth in this country, on that decisive first night of the barricades in Paris on May 10 and 11. At that particular point, the Lambertists took the position that the barricade fight with the cops was an adventure, that the students were leaving themselves open to attack and large numbers were likely to get hurt.

They concluded that what was needed was 500,000 workers to join them and until that point they were not going to engage in any adventures.

Consequently, they marched up to the barricades, lectured the students on the barricades along this line and marched off the barricades, saying "we're going to get the workers." What they did not understand is that without that night on the barricades, without 20,000 or 30,000 students battling the cops in the Latin Quarter the massive response received from the working class on May 13 could not have been obtained.

What was the reasoning of the JCR comrades? Whether they judged there was going to be a bloody battle or not, or that it might be more difficult to win without large numbers of workers, they understood that at that point their job was to stay with the students they were leading on the barricades and go through the whole fight with them.

The error made by the Lambertists at that turning point is one of those fatal errors which it's very difficult to recover from.

At the Sorbonne, which was the center of the revolutionary youth movement during the entire process, the role of the JCR was many-sided. For immediate education was the literature they put out on a day-by-day basis keeping people informed of what was happening and their analysis of it. On a long-term, more basic education they were selling and distributing the basic works by Trotsky, Marx and Lenin and so forth. They held daily meetings and rallies attended by hundreds of students. Most of them were not members of the JCR but they were looking for guidance and political leadership in this situation.

The JCR helped to build united front student organizations and demonstrations such as took place in the name of the Student Union and that were supported by the Action Committees. In the districts of Paris they helped build the Action Committees which became the main political link between the students and young workers. In the high schools they threw themselves into the developing radicalization and helped organize an expression of this radicalization through the high school action committees. They helped direct many of the student energies towards building bridges to the working class youth. At the end of this revolutionary upsurge, the JCR primarily remained a student organization and primarily university students but with important sectors of high school and working class youth.

They were able to establish JCR circles in at least half a dozen key industrial plants around Paris. They have three or four workers at the Renault plant at Billancourtes, for instance. I don't want to overemphasize its weight. It's still a small percentage of the entire organization but it's an extremely important development. The speed with which the developments took place imposed limits on the scope of their operations. There was only

a period of three weeks from the first outburst of the revolutionary upsurge until its peak at the end of May.

That's one of the key lessons to draw from the French experiences. Once you're plunged into a situation like this, there's no time to make up for what you didn't do before. There's no time to lay the groundwork. There's no time to go back and retrace your steps and take care of the things you just didn't get around to doing beforehand. If you didn't do it before, it's too late to do it then and you have to go on from where you are. There was no time after this upsurge to make up for the defaults of a whole historical epoch.

The Student Youth & Young Workers

The JCR's development throws light on the ways in which relationships are going to develop between the different classes and different sections of the youth of our own generation. It was much easier for the Communist Party to try and sow suspicions, divisions and antagonisms between the older workers and students. But the younger workers and high school students of our generation who have gone through the same experiences together are more suspicious of the ruling class than they are of each other. The reservations of the young workers who took the initiative in the plants for solidarity with the student demonstrations and strike action tend to break down faster and mutual confidence and cooperation can grow very rapidly. This happened despite the attempts of the Communist Party to prevent precisely this from taking place. Without the conscious intervention of the CP strike committees which would have been the parallel of the action committees in the factories would have developed quite rapidly. And there would have been a natural tendency for these to have developed liaisons with the action committees in the districts and the rest of the country. Given the vise-like grip of the Communist Party, there were efforts to try and get around this in the factories. The natural direction of the struggle was to go towards the action committees in the districts where the most political young workers were.

This question of the role of the students in relation to the young workers is going to be discussed a lot for quite a period of time. A couple of generalizations can be made at this point. The ideological radicalization developed first and furthest among the students. The role of the university and the changing nature of education is related to all this but I can't go into these matters now.

The developments among the student youth forecast trends in the working masses, as this upsurge indicates. The students played the vanguard role of testing and trying out many of the political alternatives arising after the rejection of Stalinism and Social Democracy. They became the catalyst in a social situation highly charged with contradictions. The example of the students struck a very responsive chord in the entire working class,

and particularly among the younger workers.

The key lesson has been the importance of the education of a revolutionary Marxist youth organization which can be the conscious revolutionary expression of our generation. Without the JCR, the opening stages of this struggle would have been much different and the actions taken by the student vanguard would have been much different.

Spontaneity and Organization

That brings up the problem of spontaneity versus the role of organization. This is one of our chief disagreements with what we generally called the anarchist tendencies among the French students and with the SDS tendency in this country. The course of events in France bore out our basic arguments and line that we advance.

First of all, on spontaneity. It's true that no revolution is exactly planned. We may be able to forecast it and organize like hell for it. But when the masses begin to move by the millions, that's the result of uncontrollable social contradictions that carry everyone and everything else along like an irresistible tide.

The role of the revolutionary vanguard is to try and direct this colossal force towards victory for the working class.

There's a tremendous element of spontaneity involved which is one of the most telling characteristics of a revolutionary upsurge. The masses themselves take over and it's a fantastically impressive thing to experience and see it taking place. All of a sudden you look out into the streets and see hundreds of thousands of workers doing exactly what you've been saying for years they're going to do. And there they are.

There's nothing comparable to this sight to give you a sense of confidence in the revolutionary potential of the working class. There's also an element of humor in this spontaneity of the masses. I suppose the revolutionaries can appreciate this spontaneity more than anyone else. For instance, the developments in France, particularly in the opening stages, like the occupation of the Nanterre University, wasn't something that had been planned out months before. It was a spontaneous response of the students to the arrest of one of their leaders. This is what we're going to do, they declared, until he's released.

The first demonstration on Boulevard St. Michel, where the vanguard was locked up inside the Sorbonne is another example. The students simply gathered by the thousands on the "Boule Mich" and started throwing rocks and anything they could get their hands on at the police vans to prevent them from arresting the students. Again, this wasn't anything organized beforehand. Nobody went out and harangued people to start throwing rocks. It was a spontaneous response to what they considered a tremendous outrage,

the arrest of hundreds of students. The first barricades, again, sprang up as the spontaneous response of the students to the threatened attacks by the police. It was a defensive reaction that nobody organized. Nobody said, okay, everybody start building barricades. Yet the barricades started going up.

The occupation of the first factory falls in this same category. It wasn't organized, planned or predicted. Some of the best examples of this creativity and inventiveness of the masses in motion came during the demonstrations such as the tearing up of the tricolored flags. The marchers simply ripped off the blue and white and kept the red for their red flags because they couldn't find red flags anywhere else during that first stage of the struggle.

Events like the chants on the demonstrations weren't worked out ahead. But, as the students met different situations along the way, they responded by the chants they brought up themselves. For instance, when the Communist Party was attacking Cohn-Bendit as a bad example of student leadership, Segúy, Secretary-General of the CGT in France, was asked by reporters at a news conference what he thought of Cohn-Bendit. Segúy's response was: "Cohn-Bendit, who's he?" So the students on their next demonstration took up as one of their central chants: "Segúy, who's he?"

On one of the biggest student demonstrations the course of the march took them by the office of L'Humanité. Our comrades were trying to figure out what to shout at the CP before the offices of L'Humanité. They thought, maybe we'll sing the Internationale or tell them to join us, join us or something like that. When the marchers got in front of L'Humanité, the spontaneous cry went up from the ranks: "Incompetent bureaucrats, incompetent bureaucrats." That's what they shouted all the way at L'Humanité.

These are some of the many elements of spontaneity that mark any mass upheaval. But in a situation like that which existed in France during the months of May and June the efficacy of mass spontaneity and initiative very rapidly reaches its limits. Even the opening stages of the events would have been very different without the intervention and influence of the vanguard organizations, without the backbone, without the structure they gave to it, the initial demonstrations and actions that they did organize.

The Limits of Spontaneity

The longer the struggle continued, the more crucial the role of organization became. Putting it on the most basic level, when 20 or 30 million people come out, they don't act spontaneously in a coordinated fashion over a period of weeks. Some group, some tendency is going to provide the decisive leadership to those masses. The question is: who is going to provide that kind of leadership? This of paramount importance not only for us but for the entire future of mankind. One of the most striking things in a situation like this, we have already read about in

the History of the Russian Revolution and the history of the Cuban revolution. But when you actually see it taking place before your eyes, it has a terrific impact. The tremendous politicalization that occurs, the tremendous thirst for knowledge that seems to come from everybody and from every corner. Masses of people are confronted with momentous social forces in motion which are far beyond the control of any individual or even any small group. Everyone's consciousness is fixed on these events -- trying to comprehend them with a tremendous intensity of feeling. There is a mass leap in consciousness which you can see and feel all around you.

Barry Sheppard commented that, after we'd been over there for a week, our articles started coming back with terms like the bourgeoisie, class-conscious, revolutionary situation -- all sorts of terms which, in such a situation, became concepts which are understood on a mass level. You become so completely absorbed by them that you forget about the lower level of the American audience, even the radicals, who are not right in the situation.

The revolutionary atmosphere completely surrounds you so that you become deeply immersed within it, saturated by it. In this situation there goes on a tremendous search for knowledge, a tremendous politicalization, a demand for leadership and organization that somebody must fill, somebody's going to provide that leadership, somebody's going to provide explanations. Then it becomes of crucial importance who is going to do it and in what direction it will go.

On the level of the working class, it's unquestionable that the CP had the control and leadership. Though shaken by the events, the Communist Party maintained control over the mass of French workers. On the other hand, among the revolutionary youth vanguard, the JCR was the main leadership. Again, as I said, this was not a question of hegemony. But they were the most prominent political tendency throughout and this could very well lead to their ability to gain hegemony in the next period over these radicalizing youth.

They doubled or tripled their size throughout France and are continuing to recruit despite the difficulties of their illegalization.

Far from proving the omnipotence of spontaneity, the events in France confirm the limits of spontaneous action and reconfirm a thousand times over the validity of the lessons of Leninism. If ever there was need for a revolutionary party, that was evident during the months of May and June, 1968 in France. Despite the unprecedented mobilization of the working masses, in spite of a general strike of five weeks duration, despite one of the most favorable opportunities in the history of mankind for the working class to take power, in the absence of a revolutionary party large enough to lead the working masses the workers were not

capable at this point of taking power in France. So, while the new generation of youth in action was a catalyst for these massive actions on the part of the working class and while the revolutionary Marxist youth group provided conscious revolutionary leadership for its own generation, without a mass Bolshevik party augmenting and implementing the activities of the best and most conscious of these revolutionary youth, another chance for the working class to take power was missed. This is the most important lesson to engrave on our minds from the French events.

There are many others I haven't even touched on, such as the role of the Vietnam war in this radicalization, the importance of the mass anti-Vietnam actions, and so forth. These are questions we will be discussing later and for a long period of time.

Our Campaign of Solidarity

The scope and nature of the campaign we have waged in this country in defense of the French students and workers, and particularly in solidarity with the JCR and PCI, was a tremendous morale-booster to our comrades in France. There are two different sides to this. One was our solidarity actions with them and the importance this had to them. The second was the way we utilized the French events and the role of our comrades in France to help build the revolutionary cadres in this country.

Both sides of our campaign were extremely important and well understood by the French comrades themselves. The leaflets, the demonstrations, the Militants, Intercontinental Press, the YSA statements, buttons, posters, L'Enragé -- all these started pouring in over there, most of them before I left. They were greatly appreciated by the French comrades and gave them a living sense of what the meaning of internationalism was and what an international movement could do. When our ad said: Join the American JCR, this kind of political solidarity with them was very important.

In addition to our political solidarity, our material solidarity is equally important. The two most important elements of this at the current time are L'Enragé and the posters we've put out. For instance, just on the level of literature, the French movement has completely sold out almost every printed thing about Trotskyism that they have since the height of this upsurge. And all these have to be reprinted so they can have them in massive quantities to meet the needs of the current situation.

Meanwhile it is up to us to translate this solidarity into action in this country, to translate it into a real internationalist consciousness that the main enemy is at home and our major responsibility is to carry forward the most effective fight here at home. By carrying the lessons of the French events to the largest possible audience in this country and translating them into American terms that are going to be comprehensible and understandable to the people we're trying to reach, we can use

the events in France and the role our comrades are playing in them to promote our fight for hegemony among the radicalizing American youth.

These French events show the tremendous power of the working class in motion. If in France today with the degree of prosperity that existed there, where the country was not involved in any costly colonial war of the proportions of Vietnam, where they didn't have the additional contradictions injected into the society such as the liberation struggle of the Afro-Americans, if basic social contradictions could shoot to the surface so rapidly and with so much force, very few can continue to convincingly argue that no such event can ever erupt in the United States.

If a revolutionary situation can develop with such overwhelming rapidity in France, despite the tremendous weight of the CP in slowing it down and finally bringing it to a halt, imagine what may happen in this country and what tasks that imposes on us. We can be thankful that we may have a few more years to prepare for an event of such magnitude.

I want to end on this note. On May 29th in France the working class could have taken power. There were half a million to a million workers and students in the streets, marching through the streets of Paris under thousands of red flags with the strains of the Internationale filling the air from one end of the city to the other, with the cries of "workers to power" resounding up and down the streets. I wish every member and sympathizer could have been there with us in that experience. Nothing can give you such a tremendous sense of confidence in the working class, their ability to fight and, with proper leadership, to take power.

This is something you just never forget. That's the kind of spirit and lesson we want every YSAer to take out in our battle to build a revolutionary youth organization in this country.

REPORT ON FRANCE

by Joe Hansen

To a Joint Meeting of the SWP-YSA
Resident National Committee Members

July 3, 1968

I will report on the situation in France as it is estimated by our European comrades and co-thinkers. There were some nuances at the beginning of the upsurge in France on how to characterize the situation. Was it pre-revolutionary, revolutionary or somewhere between pre-revolutionary and revolutionary? There may have been some other nuances. But by the end of May, there were no differences at all, so far as I know, on how to characterize the situation at that stage. By the last week of May, everyone had come to the conclusion that the situation was completely revolutionary.

Some aspects of the events were quite novel. I listened to some of the comrades trying to find historical analogies for what had happened. This was not easy. The pattern was really extraordinary. That is, the extent of the mobilization of the working class, of the middle classes, of the students, of almost the whole working population in France in the absence of a mass revolutionary party. All of the comrades were agreed that for about one week towards the end of May, roughly May 24-May 30, one of the greatest opportunities in history existed for the workers to take power, to accomplish a socialist revolution in an advanced industrial country for the first time. All of them were agreed that the key reason that the workers were unable to take power there was because of the betrayal by the Stalinists. I think the same estimate was made of the situation by the bourgeoisie. I noted in the most recent issue of Le Monde which we just received today that a lead editorial reminds the bourgeoisie that during the latter part of May, despite the election victory and what it seemed to show, the power was hanging by a thread, and that this was recognized by everyone including the general himself, that is, de Gaulle.

The power was hanging by a thread. There was no one to cut that thread and those who could have done it, the Stalinists blocked it. That was the situation as it existed at the end of May.

On May 29, the bourgeoisie opened their offensive and began to turn the tide against the revolutionary upsurge that had occurred. And within a few days the whole situation completely reversed. I was there at the time and observed this at first hand together with other comrades from the SWP and YSA. And I must say that I've never seen anything in my life that came anywhere near this in such a contrast between what the situation was on one day and what it was just even two days later.

On May 29 a whole river of workers poured through the streets in a tremendous demonstration with red flags, thousands of red flags in their march and red flags hanging from the buildings all around. And only two days later, everything was subsiding and drawing back and the forces of the bourgeoisie were marching forward in a big offensive mounted by the de Gaulle regime.

The estimate of the comrades in Europe on the situation as it stands today is that a temporary ebb has occurred in the movement. They do not consider this to be something that's going to be long lasting. It's not something that's going to last for five or ten years but something that can resume in the coming period, that is in the very near future.

The ebb set in with the end of the strikes, with the workers going back to work. After all, they could not remain out indefinitely in a general strike. They do not have the resources for that and the objectives for remaining out on strike seemed to be missing in the absence of general proposals and a program that ought to have been advanced by the Communist Party. So they went back to work. And with the end of the strikes the movement began to recede. The students by themselves were incapable of maintaining the offensive and they, too, had to make a retreat whether they liked it or not. The police, under the instructions of the de Gaulle regime, began probing for weak spots, began to organize violence here and there, in some cases moving in against the workers in factories that had been occupied as at Flins and Sochaux. They attacked the workers and violent action occurred in several places. Then they did the same thing in relation to the schools, beginning with probing actions to see what the response would be and finally succeeded in occupying such key places as the Odeon and the Sorbonne. So the student movement receded, also, although even now there are a few places that still seem to be held by the students. This is of minor consequence now and can only be of a very temporary character because the whole thing is receding.

For the summer vacation period at least it is very unlikely that there will be any kind of resurgence of the movement. The earliest that anyone guesses that it could resume would be by October or November. By that time the inflation in France will possibly have wiped out the gains made in the big movement in May. In some cases, the workers got wage increases of up to 20 percent. But in the very same week that the concessions were made by the government, the government also permitted price rises to begin even in such key items as bread. And other prices began to shoot up immediately, too. So it's very likely that these gains will be liquidated quite rapidly.

But the workers gained a lot of confidence through their struggle. They really don't feel defeated. The vanguard, of course, feels that the movement could have gone much further, could have accomplished great things, could even have put in a workers government or a socialist government. This vanguard feels disappointed but their disappointment and frustration is turning

against the Communist Party -- which is a progressive thing. But as a whole the working class feels that it made gains and it feels confident. The workers had a taste of the almost complete collapse of government power, and of their own strength as displayed in their control over industry. These things can bring about a resurgence in the coming period that can be even bigger than the previous one. The editorial I just referred to in Le Monde warns about this possibility if the regime does not move very quickly to rectify its objectives and its methods in France. But a reform of that scope is beyond the capacities of the regime.

That's the way our comrades estimate the situation as a whole. An ebb has set in; but within this ebb a kind of counter trend exists. During the May events one of the most important developments was the appearance of a new vanguard. That is, a layer that in Paris ran somewhere between 20,000 to 30,000 people. This new vanguard is socialist in consciousness, revolutionary-minded, favorable to Cuba and China, anti-Stalinist in outlook, blaming the Communist Party for the betrayal of the May opportunity in France.

In this new vanguard, our movement won great prestige through its role in the May events, particularly in the beginning stages of the movement when our youth comrades were very active in the student demonstrations and helping on the barricades and in participating with the rebel youth in their struggles against the police. The articles in the bourgeois press about the influence and the role of the Trotskyists, although sometimes written in a rather lurid way and with some exaggerations in certain instances, nevertheless reflected a real fact; namely that the Trotskyist movement, the Fourth International in particular, became widely known and identified as one of the main revolutionary currents. This is now an element in the thinking of this new vanguard in France.

As a consequence of this, our comrades in France recruited rapidly, especially to the JCR. They at least doubled their forces and may have tripled them in Paris. Outside Paris, when I left it was still difficult because of the repression to estimate the number of new recruits. In the immediate future our comrades see big opportunities for moving ahead rather rapidly. Their key problem, as they view it, is to consolidate the gains they made and to take full advantage of recruiting opportunities in the period ahead. The repression cut across the work that our comrades were doing and compelled them to engage in a fight for existence. And for some days it was very difficult to determine how far the government intended to go with this repression. It may have been that the government itself had not made up its mind about this but waited to see what the repercussions would be and how far sympathy and support for the victims might extend both nationally and internationally. After holding Pierre Frank for ten days the government released him. But it's not known how long they will permit him to remain free or what new steps they might decide on.

The law involved is very peculiar. If the organization that has been dissolved abides by the decree then no one is legally subject to prosecution. If the organization is continued, or reconstituted, individuals involved can be prosecuted.

Our comrades are challenging the legality of the decree. In the first place, the law which was passed was never directed against the organizations of the left -- revolutionary organizations -- it was directed against fascist organizations, the key measures being passed in 1936. It has never been applied before to any revolutionary organizations.

The JCR and PCI were charged specifically with organizing militia and combat groups. They have denied both of these charges because they did not engage in any activity of this kind. They did not organize combat groups. They did not organize a militia. It's rather interesting that when Pierre Frank was questioned, the police never brought up anything about a militia or combat groups. His conclusion was that the police knew that there was no such thing involved.

The other grounds on which our comrades are challenging the law is that they are a legal organization in existence since long before the war. Pierre Frank wrote up a legal paper for the court in which he traces the entire history of the Trotskyist movement in France to its origins back in 1928 and even earlier. He recalls the role of the Trotskyist movement during World War II when it participated in the resistance and he cites its whole record since then. So as a legal party it has a strong case. So they are fighting very hard to maintain their organizations, the PCI and the JCR, as they were constituted and are challenging the decree which attempted to illegalize them. Meanwhile, they're continuing to put out their publications.

In France itself, in addition to their own activities in fighting the ban, a rather broad defense movement has been organized headed by some very prominent figures like Laurent Schwartz and Jean Paul Sartre. This committee is rapidly gaining support and can become quite important in the defense work there. They also have got good legal counsel. An interesting little point about such cases in France is that it's a point of honor with the lawyers not to take a fee. That's quite different from the American custom. Thus the expenses involve technical items like briefs and so on. So it can turn out that they will have a very popular case involving the defense of democratic rights in France and with the legal expenses not being so prohibitive as they would be in a similar situation in the United States or in some other country.

In addition to that, efforts are being made to extend the defense movement on an international scale. The French comrades were very happy to see the efforts which were immediately begun by such organizations as the SWP and the YSA in the United States and with the Trotskyist comrades in Canada, in Great Britain and other countries. Here, one of the key aspects of the defense work

in all of these countries is to express solidarity with the comrades in France and help them out as much as possible in a financial way.

Now I'll turn to some of the other aspects of the situation. A number of comrades want to know how our organization in France measured up to the great opportunity that confronted it. I've already indicated the impression made by the JCR and the PCI on the bourgeois reporters and the impact of the JCR on the vanguard as a whole. The situation with the PCI, that is with the adult organization was a little bit different. This was due to the fact that the JCR is a youth organization and the upsurge began among the students -- a protest movement, occupation of the schools, demonstrations in the streets, battles between students and the police. Young workers became interested in the developments and acted as a connecting link between the students and the factories. They brought back to the older workers in the plants stories of what was happening. This helped inspire the strikes that developed into a general strike. Because of this pattern, the PCI, the adult organization, did not become active in the same way that the JCR did in the opening stages of the movement with the exception of those comrades who belong to both organizations. But as an organization the PCI did not come prominently into the general knowledge of the new vanguard or even of the bourgeois press up until the time of the repression. But when the repression came and the PCI was named as one of the organizations that was dissolved and its connection with the JCR became widely known, the balance was altered in the public eye. Within the Trotskyist movement itself in France, the PCI, of course, served to connect the young activists with the whole accumulated experience of the Trotskyist movement internationally. Comrades like Pierre Frank played an indispensable role in following the events, making decisions, mobilizing the movement, and handling publicity.

The press, of course, mentioned other Trotskyist groups in France. The Trotskyist movement in France has a long history of splits so that a number of groupings exist that consider themselves to be Trotskyist or which can trace their origin to a split from the Trotskyist movement.

Probably the largest of these is the OCI and the FER. The OCI is the Lambert group connected with Healy and the FER is their student group. They're credited in the bourgeois press with having a membership of around 1,000. They were rather active at the beginning of the struggle, that is, the beginning of the demonstrations and even participated in building barricades on the night of May 10 and 11. But just before the action got really hot, about 2 o'clock in the morning, they withdrew because they considered it to be an adventure and they did not want to participate in an adventure. They warned everybody that this was an adventure that could lead to needless casualties, said that what was needed was at least 500,000 workers to really confront the police, and they left.

But there were thousands of students engaged in action on the barricades. Even if the action was somewhat adventurist, still for a small group it was a criminal act to leave. You have to participate once an action of this size is undertaken and you are not in a position of authoritative leadership. Our comrades stayed right through the whole thing with these thousands of students and in a very active way. This one error proved almost fatal for the Lambertists. They had to confront their error continually, day after day, from then on. In the Sorbonne, for example, which became almost like a soviet, with all the groups participating in continuous meetings and discussions, the Lambertists decided it would not pay for them even to have a table with their literature because the table became a focus point for arguments about whether or not they were cowards in the May 10 demonstration. Of course, the National Committee of the Socialist Labor League passed a resolution that they were not cowards, but even translated into French, this was not very convincing to the students in the Sorbonne.

On the other hand, our comrades who participated throughout were very prominent in the discussions in the Sorbonne. Thus it became established in the minds of the new vanguard that there are different kinds of Trotskyists. There is the kind who mean what they say, who are revolutionists. This is the Fourth International. Then there are some who can talk good, talk militantly, but who, when it comes to action, prove to be something else again.

Our comrades report that there are some differences between the Lambert group in Paris and those in the provinces. Because of the whole general strike condition when communications were broken off pretty much between Paris and the provinces, the Lambert groups in the provinces acted somewhat differently than those in Paris. There was a much better relationship between our comrades and the Lambert groups than existed in Paris.

There's another Trotskyist group in France called Voix Ouvriere, Workers Voice, which we knew about in general but without paying too much attention to them in the past because they seemed to be living a perpetual underground existence. The only way you can attend their meetings is by invitation, that's their public meetings. Even at the Sorbonne, they put up a sign at their meetings -- By Invitation Only.

They have a newspaper which we have followed for I don't know how many years without paying much attention to it because there never seemed to be any articles explaining where they stood and what their views were on some of the key issues in the world. They concentrated on problems of direct concern to the workers. On the other hand, the paper has been expanding and is now a weekly. It even went photo offset, a great improvement over the previous process.

Then we took notice of them in relation to the Socialist Labor League and the Healyites. They were the group which participated

in the famous conference that Healy organized to reconstruct the Fourth International. Healy threw them out of the conference and that was the end of their relationship with Healy. They also had connections with Robertson in the U.S.

It turned out that during the May events in Paris the Voix Ouvriere played an active role throughout -- stayed with the demonstrations and participated side by side with our comrades in the events there. As a result of the common action, relations began to become rather fraternal between the two groupings. At a certain point, our comrades decided to propose a closer working relationship and they were responsive to this.

The Voix Ouvriere group does not have a separate youth organization. When a youth enters their movement, he joins the group as such. They seem to have a rather high proletarian composition. They also appear to have a pretty good organizational and efficiency level.

Besides that I should mention the Pablo group, the only one that was not banned. I think the reason for that is that they are so small as to be completely insignificant. In the last days of May, they did put up a table in the Sorbonne manned by some attractive young comrades probably brought in from other countries. But that seemed to be their only involvement in the events in France.

On the anarchists. The March 22 Movement is strongly influenced by certain individual anarchists and maybe by the situationists -- the international situationists. Our comrades likewise were involved. One of the leading people in the March 22 Movement joined us. Cohn-Bendit, the main figure, who got a lot of publicity seems to be standing apart from us and maybe he is not interested. It remains to be seen -- he's very young -- what will happen with him.

Besides this there were the Maoists. The Maoists were active in the May events. Strangely enough, despite their antipathy to Trotskyism as such, they struck up rather friendly relations with our people and towards the end they even got into some discussions. One of the things the Maoists sought to score on was the Cuban position on the French events. They used the Cuban coverage of the French events in Granma as proof that they aren't so revolutionary after all. The Cubans ran an article in Bohemia which I have not seen but it was supposed to have been a better article. The Maoists said, well that's for internal circulation in Cuba. What are they saying to the world outside? And they pointed to what happened in Peking where tremendous parades were held in support of the French students and workers.

The Maoists are the only ones who are accused of actually trying to organize a combat group in France. I don't know whether they admit these charges or deny them. I didn't have a chance to learn that before I left.

The Cubans, of course, did not participate at all in the events and could not, having no forces in France. Cuban opinion on the events is important naturally because of the conclusions they might draw about them, especially in relation to the problems of the revolution in Latin America and the colonial world as a whole.

Now let me turn to the reaction among our comrades to what the SWP and the YSA did in relation to these events! That is, our decision to send a team there to report for the Militant and Intercontinental Press and the Young Socialist and the way we sought to mobilize our entire party to make whatever gains we could out of that situation for ourselves in the United States.

First of all on Intercontinental Press. Intercontinental Press is looked at a little bit differently in other countries than it is in the United States. Our tendency here is to regard it somewhat as a publication of our own like the Militant or the Young Socialist. But in other countries, and I noticed this very particularly in France, Intercontinental Press is more like the voice of the International. So they look at it a little bit differently. They're quite interested in the Militant and the YS and what they print, but they look at these as the expression of the SWP and the Trotskyist youth movement in the United States. So if they take an article, for example, from the YS or the Militant, it's with the idea that, well, here's an American article which would be good for our comrades to know about, for the public to know about. But to them Intercontinental Press is the voice of the International and thus more directly theirs. For example, a Swiss comrade began by saying what a magnificent job Intercontinental did -- that the best information obtainable on the events in France was in Intercontinental.

A comrade said that in Italy they had decided to put out a small book about the events in France and that some of the best information came from Intercontinental. So they had to translate French material from English into Italian.

Of course, I gave a report about what our plans were here, and how the SWP and YSA had mobilized, and called attention to such things as the ads in the Militant to join the YSA if you want to join something that's like the JCR. They thought this was great stuff showing how comrades in other countries could take advantage of something that they were doing.

Everything that we did -- the demonstrations that were organized, the reproduction of L'Enragé, the leaflets, buttons -- all that sort of stuff that was done here, they thought that was wonderful. And you'd hear comments from comrades engaged in action in France that for the first time they had seen in reality what internationalism meant. They knew about it before, and appreciated it, but this brought it home: a party mobilizing its forces, trying to help those involved in the actions, sending people to cover the events, while at the same time trying to do everything it possibly could to recruit and to advance the movement for itself in its own country.

Discussion

SEIDEMAN: Could you say something about the ability of the JCR and the PCI to reach out to some of the young workers in the factories.

J. HANSEN: During the May events themselves, their primary problem was to integrate themselves as deeply as possible into the student movement as it was -- demonstrating, occupying the schools and participating in the battles in the streets. That was their primary problem. The movement itself -- particularly the demonstrations in the streets -- attracted young workers from the factories and they joined in these demonstrations. In this way our comrades got to know young people of this character. This led to some recruitment of young workers in factories and plants around Paris. Very likely in other parts of the country, too, although there was no information available on this at the time I left. They recruited these young workers and they are now members of the JCR. This therefore gives them an avenue into these plants. What they will do from here on out I don't know, but I imagine that they will do their utmost to follow through in the usual Trotskyist fashion on a question like this.

PETRICK: Could you explain what effects this will have on the Communist Party.

J. HANSEN: The first reactions in the Communist Party occurred among the intellectuals and, I suppose, part of the trade union bureaucrats, especially that sector of the bureaucracy that's supposed to deal with intellectual problems. I'm thinking of a person like Barjonet. Their reaction was that the CP was completely out of tune with the events, that they were moving against the students who were engaging in demonstrations and losing all contact with them. They were much alarmed at this and there were some expressions of this inside the Communist Party. We know about a letter that was drawn up by some intellectuals with very sharp criticisms of the CP leadership in this situation. And there were other places that we know about where there was questioning inside the CP on the line that was being followed.

Now, the impression I have is that when the CP accepted the elections, probably these people kept their criticisms down so as not to rock the boat during the election period, hoping to make the strongest possible showing in the elections. But the elections turned out very badly for the CP. Their actual vote went down from what it had been. It had previously been around five million and it dropped much below that figure in the first round. And then in the second round of the elections they lost a large number of seats which they had held in the National Assembly. Their whole strategy, everything they'd promised and everything they'd claimed to be the correct thing to do, turned against them. It was a real disaster for them, the whole thing.

I imagine that from here on out the CP leadership will be very busy answering criticisms among the ranks, especially among sectors that are thinking about these problems, as to the role that they played. The main thing is they have cut themselves off from a key layer which they had previously dominated. In 1936, for example, and also at the end of the war this particular layer was under their influence. They have cut themselves off from this. This whole process, which includes losing youth from the CP, expelling them, etc., has now reached such a point that you can say they have virtually lost the younger generation, especially the students, but also the young workers. I expect that in the coming period this will cause considerable repercussions inside the CP itself. How far it will go is another question.

One of the interesting aspects of this is that it is now possible in France for revolutionary-minded people and revolutionary organizations to talk directly with members of the CP. The Trotskyists, for example, are no longer pariahs. They can talk directly with CP rank and filers in the plants and in the student movement. And it is no longer possible for the CP to avoid debates before audiences willing to listen to both sides. In this way, new opportunities are opening up for us which are closely related to the repercussions inside the CP caused by the May events.

ROBERTS: It seemed to me that the initial appraisal in the Trotskyist movement, or at least what we were getting through, was that de Gaulle would accept the tacit offer of a popular front government. And with the favor the French CP did for de Gaulle you might think that that would have been the course they'd follow. But as it turned out, they followed exactly the opposite course. They cut off any approach to a popular front government and really kicked the CP hard. I wonder what your thinking is on why they did this.

J. HANSEN: Actually, I don't think the French bourgeoisie at any time had in mind accepting a popular front government such as the one in 1936. What was possible in the situation was a left Gaullist, a bonapartist government but to the left of de Gaulle, around such figures as Mendes-France or Mitterand. It would be like the de Gaulle regime, but to the left of it a little bit. What the CP wanted in such a government was a few posts.

What they would have liked to have seen was a shift to the left with the French bourgeoisie again relying on parliament rather than extra-parliamentary means to run things in France. In such a parliament they would like to have a sizeable block with which they could exercise pressure on a bourgeois government. That's the most that they wanted.

As to exactly why the bourgeoisie took some other method, I don't know all the ins and outs of that. But in that week, that one week when it was possible to have taken power, things were in an absolute shambles. Figures like Mitterand and Mendes-France were speculating rather openly that de Gaulle -- after all,

he is 78 -- would simply throw up his hands and resign and that would be the finish of it. But de Gaulle is a peculiar type. We have a few of them in this country like that. He's a military politician. He had his own way of looking at it and therefore his personality played a certain role. He didn't want to retire from history -- like that -- just throw up his hands and walk off. But also he calculated -- and he may have been right in this -- that the best way to handle things was to bring his fist down on the table real hard, let the table bounce and see what happened. And he knew the CP pretty well. They were not going to do anything. They would not really challenge him in this game. In other words, he calculated that it would not be necessary, really, to give them what they wanted. They would be satisfied with an election; of course, an election held according to de Gaulle's electoral laws. And de Gaulle's calculations proved to be exactly right.

As soon as he mentioned elections, they were the first ones to accept it. This was sufficient for them.

As to why the CP did this, why they did not exercise more pressure, that's the most interesting question. Because the CP presumably could have put more pressure on the bourgeoisie and demanded more. They were in a position to do that. But they didn't do this because of pressure from the Kremlin on them. The Kremlin was afraid to have someone like a Mendes-France or a Mitterrand come into office because his foreign policy might be aligned more with the United States and less with the Soviet Union. In other words, de Gaulle's policy has been a little bit anti-American. And they were afraid that someone like Mendes-France or Mitterrand would be pro-American and this would be bad for them. Therefore, just on this narrow foreign policy consideration they put the pressure on the CP to go along.

The calculations really involved shadings -- left de Gaullist, right de Gaullist, popular government and like that. And in any case, the bourgeoisie epitomized by de Gaulle don't give a damn about the whole electoral process or parliament. For them, power is in the streets. Power comes out of the barrel of a gun. That's the way they look at it. Therefore their move, no matter what happened on the electoral front, was to strengthen the right and to counterbalance what had been happening on the left.

The big upsurge in France, with the workers gaining enormously, especially in consciousness of their strength, tilted the whole balance of class forces in France. De Gaulle's moves were intended, and the bourgeoisie agreed with him, to strengthen the right and especially on an extra-parliamentary level. This meant the organization of civic action groups to begin preparing for a struggle in the streets. It meant taking the ultra-reactionary generals out of prison, rehabilitating them. They presumably weren't supposed to take any part in politics, but one of the first things that happened when Georges Bidault returned to France was that he made a big political statement.

ROBERTS: You would say then that something much deeper than a struggle on the electoral arena was involved?

J. HANSEN: Yes, something much deeper. On the electoral arena, that was just a pale shadow of what was actually happening on the real class struggle front in France and it was quite distorted. It's almost like there were two populations involved in France. One is the real population that runs things -- that runs the factories, that runs the communication systems and so on -- the working population. When these people went on strike, ten million of them, you could see where the power was because everything stopped in France. The government couldn't even send a postcard. Only one plane landed at Orly airport. One plane. They made an exception. That was de Gaulle's plane. These ten million strikers demonstrated where the real power is. When the elections occurred, suddenly everything seemed reversed. It looked like a big landslide for de Gaulle. Where did it come from? On the electoral level people vote -- stockholders and petty-bourgeois layers -- that have no part in the industrial system. They don't participate. They are just parasites. But they vote.

Some of the most active elements among those who actually operate the industries or who participate with the workers in the class struggle do not vote because of their age level for one thing. Kids on the barricades were fourteen, fifteen years old -- high school kids. They don't vote. Twenty-five thousand were even excluded after they came of age. On the other hand, people who retired long ago still vote. So you've got two populations. One is the voting population and the other is the really productive population. They're not completely divided and certain sectors of them coincide so an election is important in registering sentiment but it always gives a distorted picture. For de Gaulle, the elections were not of primary interest. But he utilized them to help build up the right, the right wing forces in France.

JENNESS: Could you say something about the tactics of our comrades in the elections there.

J. HANSEN: They debated this and just before they were repressed they'd come more or less to the conclusion that they would advise the workers to abstain from the election because the whole thing was a fraud and it was a betrayal of the CP to have agreed to participate in them. Therefore, on the first round they advised abstention. But they were debating what to do about the second round when I left. In the first round you register your opinions and indicate your fundamental stand. The second round generally comes down to throwing weight behind preferred candidates. Our comrades were debating whether in the case of a CPer or someone similar running against a de Gaullist they shouldn't advise workers to vote for the CPer as against the de Gaullist. But what they actually did I don't know. They were debating this when I had to leave there.

GARZA: How seriously do the comrades there take the possibility of a large fascist movement coming out of this shift to the right?

J. HANSEN: They're rather doubtful that this will occur. They see no real reason why the bourgeoisie would want to take the risk of unleashing a fascist movement in France as long as the CP is playing the role that it does play in France. There's no reason for the bourgeoisie at this point to organize a fascist movement to smash the CP, the Social Democrats, and the entire labor force as long as the CP is playing the kind of role it's playing. So they don't see any immediate danger, or any immediate possibility, of the organization or the appearance of a big fascist movement in France. This also is their opinion as to the possibility of some turn like the Greek events where some generals suddenly seize power.

I should add to that that they're probably correct from another point of view -- that there's not a large mass at this point in France of ruined petty-bourgeois layers such as existed especially in Germany in the early thirties. This does not exist now in France. One of the interesting aspects of this whole situation was the fact that France was presumably prosperous. It was a consumer society. Pretty close to being a society of abundance, as they say in the United States. Unemployment was not too high although there was some unemployment. The country was not in a real deep depression, nothing of the kind. There were not great masses of really maddened petty-bourgeoisie which would constitute the social base that's required for the establishment of a fascist regime. That's still lacking in France. So that the effort of de Gaulle to redress the balance by strengthening the right is not of such a character as to really unleash forces which at this point would lead to a fascist government. What it could lead to is a sharpening of the struggle, a certain polarization in the class forces in France. The next round, so to speak, could see sharp conflicts very early with different rightist forces. I don't think they'll get very far with the French workers feeling the way they do. But there could be some sharp struggles. Whereas in the May situation there was absolutely nothing like this. After the strikes swept France there was no violence until the police began to move. In this whole big movement, this whole big revolutionary situation with ten million strikers involved there weren't more than two or three people killed, and that came at the end.

LUND: How big is the PCI and has the PCI ever run in elections before?

J. HANSEN: I think that in one election Pierre Frank was run for office, but I wouldn't be too sure when that was. They have participated in -- I'm not sure -- two, three, maybe four elections. In certain places they have run candidates in certain areas. But they have never been large enough to run candidates on a scale that's required in France to count as an electoral party. You

have to have rather large forces to do that. You have to get votes measuring up into at least tens of thousands to count as an electoral party in France and their size is nowhere near that. Their size is comparable for their country to what the SWP is for this country. Maybe they have a few more in comparison to the size of the population.

Their policy in relation to elections up until now has been complicated by the fact that large workers parties have existed there for many, many years -- the Social Democracy with some splitoffs and the CP. In France, the CP has had a standing among the working class about like the Labor Party in Great Britain. A small revolutionary grouping in France or in Britain has always been confronted with this problem of what to do in relation to this big electoral machine which is backed by the workers, which has the confidence of the workers, which, if you do not support them in an election or if you run against their candidates in an election, makes it impossible for you to talk with the workers who have confidence in these formations. This has always been a complicating factor in these countries, both in England and in France. Now this situation existed in France right up until this very May. This problem existed for them and led to all kinds of problems on a tactical level. We don't have much of a problem like that because in the United States there has never been a formation of this character of such size and solidity and standing. This always has to be borne in mind in relation to their electoral policy.