

French Attitudes toward the European Economic Community:
The Evolution of the French Left

by

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A THESIS

Presented to the Interdisciplinary Program: International
Studies

and to the Honors College of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts

June 1991

APPROVED:



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An Abstract of the Thesis of
Heidi Krause for the degree of Bachelor of Arts
In the Department of to be taken June 1991
International Studies

Title: FRENCH ATTITUDES TOWARD THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC
COMMUNITY: THE EVOLUTION OF THE FRENCH LEFT

Approved:  _____
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The European policy of the French Left has evolved from distrust of European institutions to support of a strong Europe. To obtain a clear picture of influences on this policy, I have examined the importance of Gaullism under the Fifth Republic in France, as well as the Socialist and Communist parties' attempt at forming common policies. During the Socialist government's first term, the conflict between domestic economic and agricultural policy and foreign policy was instrumental in turning French President Mitterrand towards Europe to protect French interests.

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Chapter One: Introduction

An opposition party in France is free to criticize the government, offering its own strategies to compare with the plans of those in power. The opposition bases its strategies more on ideology than on political viability, in the hope of attracting new members. Once in power, however, the former opposition must adapt to the realities of governing. The French Left's policy on the European Economic Community illustrates this point, from the creation of the Community in the 1950s to the first term of Socialist government in 1981-1988. As the Left's strategies evolved in its drive toward the presidency, so did its European policy. At first the Left opposed the Community's capitalist characteristics, but while in power the Left sought to increase the power of European institutions. This evolution occurred mainly out of recognition that membership in Europe, albeit a capitalist one, was crucial to protecting France's interests.

Under the Gaullist regimes of de Gaulle and Pompidou, and then under the Center-Right government of Giscard d'Estaing, the Left developed from a weak, divided party into a strong force capable of winning power. In the process of transformation, the two main factions within the Left, the Socialists and Communists, came together in a

union out of political necessity. The Union of the Left that began in 1971 produced the Common Program of 1972, which was designed to serve as a platform of government. The Leftist union also produced several electoral agreements that culminated in the Left's election to presidential office in 1981, under the leadership of the Socialist François Mitterrand.

From the Gaullist through the Socialist era, France's foreign policy has shown a great deal of continuity. This has much to do with powers of the presidency under the Fifth Republic's constitution. The Fifth Republic, which had begun in 1958, was the creation of Charles de Gaulle. De Gaulle had a special affection for the field of foreign policy, which he made his own personal occupation. The constitution, written according to his design, provided him the means to do this through the powers it gave the president, as compared with parliament, which it made relatively weak. Subsequent presidents followed de Gaulle's pattern, but it was thought that a Socialist government would reverse the pattern and give power back to the Parliament, as was the case under the Left-dominated Fourth Republic. Indeed, before the 1981 elections the French Left had talked of plans to revise the constitution.

Surprisingly, when Mitterrand took office he said "the presidency suits me."¹ In his inaugural address Mitterrand restated the Gaullist vision of France, saying "France must light the way in the progress of mankind."² By making foreign policy his personal occupation, Mitterrand perpetuated the Gaullist tradition.

After criticizing de Gaulle's nationalism for many years, the Socialists started their tenure in office following a foreign policy based on protection of French sovereignty rather than on sacrificing it to a European Economic Community. Several observers of French politics have noted this continuity. Other observers, however, have claimed that Mitterrand is attached to the European Community because it justifies his policies.³

These interpretations are in fact both valid. In the case of agricultural policy, for example, Mitterrand tried

¹Wright, Vincent. *The Government and Politics of France*, 3rd ed. (New York: Holmes & Meier, Pubs., Inc., 1989), p.52.

²Pierre, Henri. "Mostly Plus Ça Change," *Europe*, March-April 1982, p.42.

³For information on continuity in the Mitterrand presidency, see Stanley Hoffmann's essay in *The Mitterrand Experiment* (Ross, George, Stanley Hoffmann and Sylvia Malzacher, eds., Oxford: University Press, 1987), pp.294-305, or A.W. DePorte's article, "France's New Realism," in *Foreign Affairs* 63:144-65. Mitterrand's biographer accuses Mitterrand of reacting to circumstances in *La Diplomatie de Mitterrand ou le Triomphe des Apparences* (Les Loges-en-Josas, France: Editions de la Bievre, 1985), p.135.

to obtain favorable market prices in the EEC while subsidizing prices at home. This was clearly a case of looking out for one of France's most important national interests. In a similar way, some members of the Socialist Party started rumors that France would leave the European Monetary System in 1982 after the second devaluation of the franc in eight months. Under the threat of French departure other members of the EMS made concessions to France. This strategy was remarkably similar to that used by de Gaulle during a negotiations crisis in 1965. Like de Gaulle, Mitterrand recognized the benefits of European membership; the rumors were merely a ruse. By staying in the EMS Mitterrand was able to blame changes in his economic policy on the requirements of membership in the Community. When in the second half of his first term Mitterrand called for a relance of European union, he was returning to his ideal of a strong, united and ultimately powerful Europe.

This thesis is divided into three parts. The first discusses the background of Europe and sets the Common Market in a wider context of a movement towards a united Europe. Gaullist foreign policy and early leftist European policy are included in this chapter. The second chapter will look at the European policy described in the Left's first platform of government, the Common Program of 1972. The Program's section on policy towards Europe contains

evidence of both Socialist and Communist influence, as the document was an attempt at unity between the two currents. A look at the Program is necessary for comparison with post-1981 policy.

In the third chapter I will examine the Mitterrand government's European policy, as it served as a means of dealing with the frustrations of domestic policy, and as Mitterrand eventually turned to Europe as a means of defending French interests. This examination will include the three cases mentioned above: the EEC's Common Agricultural Policy, the European Monetary Union, and the creation of a Political Community. Since Mitterrand was reelected in 1988 for another seven-year term, the second term's policy is still in the process of formation. For that reason I will limit my report to the first term of office, 1981-1988. The reader may be aware that in 1986, when legislative elections were held, the right-wing parties won a majority in parliament and therefore formed a government under the neo-Gaullist Jacques Chirac. The conflict between a left-wing President and a right-wing Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs could have an effect on foreign policy; therefore, I will touch on this situation, known as cohabitation, in reference to its effect on European policy. The Gaullist-inspired tradition of a

strong presidency continued throughout Mitterrand's first term.

Explanation of Method

While writing the first two chapters I used secondary sources, that is, analyses of policy, making my own interpretations where necessary. I drew on historical and political context to explain relevant passages. The wealth of information on the history of the Left's rise to power, as well as on the history of the creation of Europe, allows for examination of differing opinions.

Scholarship on the Mitterrand presidency is more limited than that on de Gaulle, not only for reasons of importance in world politics but also for reasons of historical perspective. To my knowledge no books exist specifically on the Socialist government's European policy. For this reason I have drawn on scholarly analyses for the premise of my thesis but have looked for primary sources (press conferences, debates in the European Parliament) in order to illustrate my points.

I have used sources in both English and French. Where I have quoted French-language sources, I will make a note as to the origin of the translation. In the case of the French magazine Le Nouvel Observateur, I am responsible for the translating.

In this thesis I have tried to narrow my scope solely to that of the French government. Other countries, such as the United States and West Germany, also had a great deal of influence in French foreign affairs. However, to examine their role with fairness would have required consideration of their own political situations, which is beyond the scope of this project. For this reason I have also omitted discussion of other European problems, such as defense and the European Coal and Steel Community.

Definition of Terms

In order to understand fully this thesis, the reader will need to have a grasp on the vocabulary of Europe. The very word "Europe" does not in the context of this thesis refer to the geographical formation that stretches from the Atlantic to the Urals; it refers to the group of six, ten, or twelve countries who decided to join together to form the EEC. Similarly, "European" and "citizen of Europe" are two different terms. A European is a person who believes in the necessity and rightness of the Community; a citizen of Europe is an inhabitant of one of the member states. Some analysts view these terms as artificial. In at least one quote in this thesis the reader will find quotation marks placed around these terms, as though they were not legitimate words. It is true that those outside the

Community but part of the continent might wonder if they, too are Europeans and begin to feel like second-class citizens. Unfortunately, these terms are the only ones available; others, such as "Europeanist" or "pro-European integrationist" are suitable but too bulky, in my opinion.

The most contested terms, and the most bandied about, are "union" and "integration." At the most basic level these words refer to cooperation between member countries in order to reach a desired goal; however, they often refer as well to political union and the loss of sovereignty that it implies. At least one recalcitrant political leader, Margaret Thatcher, has stated that she might willingly support European integration if only someone could tell her what it was. In this thesis "union" and "integration" apply to political cooperation and the ensuing surrender of sovereignty.

Chapter Two: Background

In the transition from Gaullism in the beginning of the Fifth Republic to Socialism in the 1980s, some scholars have seen as much continuity as change. If Socialist President François Mitterrand's policies are to be labeled as having Gaullist tendencies, it will be necessary for the reader to understand Gaullism and most importantly, de Gaulle's policy toward the European Economic Community. The continuity from right-wing to leftist government is an important element of Mitterrand's foreign policy.

Despite neo-nationalism's appeal for the members of the European Economic community, Mitterrand and his allies also recognized that the creation of Europe was a given and that the creative force was unstoppable. In the latter part of his first term Mitterrand set himself up as an "old man of Europe" who had learned the lessons of history; he tried to reconcile Gaullist protection of national interests with the necessity of giving Europe an identity of her own. The reader will learn these same lessons of history by reading a short description of the idea of a united Europe.

The first part of this chapter will look at the birth of Europe and at the external factors that most influenced pro-Europe thinkers. Second, de Gaulle's role in Europe will come under scrutiny. Finally, in order to give a wider

perspective to the policy of the left, I will look at early leftist attitudes toward Europe, before the Common Program was signed in 1972.

History of European Cooperation

The idea of a unified Europe has tempted philosophers and statesmen for centuries. As early as 1306 Pierre Dubois, who had served King Philip the Fair of France and King Edward I of England, sensed that as the Church's power declined and nationalism grew, some sort of European Council would be necessary to keep the peace among countries.¹ This idea never took a concrete form, however, in part because the citizens of Europe were too attached to their communities and were secure in the knowledge that Europe's power reached around the world. No outside force yet threatened Europe. Throughout the centuries Dubois' idea did have its proponents, however, who kept this notion alive.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, interest in a European federation increased. The eighteenth century, the century of the Enlightenment, gave rise to a great deal of thought on the subject of human freedoms, federal principles, and representative governments. At the same

¹Pegg, Carl H. Evolution of the European Idea 1914-1932
(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press,
1983), p.2.

time there was a growing awareness of Europe's common intellectual and spiritual history. Philosophical writings expressed a merging of these two movements. For example, the Baron de Montesquieu often spoke of Europe as a state made up of smaller provinces, and Napoleon mused during his exile at Saint-Helena about how he might have unified Europe had he managed to conquer Russia.² The Count Henri de Saint-Simon went further yet; in 1814 he designed a system for a European federation that would include a bicameral Parliament whose mission would be the management of a broad spectrum of European issues.

If the eighteenth century gave thinkers the words and framework to use when envisioning a united Europe, in the nineteenth century several developments took place that would serve as impetuses for creation of an actual European federation. Carl H. Pegg identified five important developments: the increasing importance of science and technology in industry and transportation; the grounding of federal principles in the United States and in Switzerland, and the establishment of the Zollverein, a customs union among the various states in Germany; the emergence of an international peace movement; the growth of Socialism with its emphasis on common interests among the working classes

²Pegg, p.3.

of the world; and the upsurge of nationalistic principles.³ Of these, Pegg chose pacifism as the most important contributory factor, as the European ideal was discussed at every peace conference and as it was generally hoped that the nations of the continent would lay down their weapons and "merge into a firm and superior unity."⁴ While idealism was indeed an important factor in the building of a European dream, the reality of growing nationalistic attitudes served as a reminder that a disunited Europe could dissolve into a chaos of warring groups.

A conservative attempt at cooperation between European powers known as the "Concert of Europe" was active during the mid-19th century. There was no organization, only a inclination on the part of certain countries to hold discussions on areas of common interest. The Concert of Europe was instrumental in recognizing Belgium and in partitioning Africa and Asia; on more critical issues, however, the Concert disintegrated as constituent countries followed their own national interests. Nationalism eventually defeated this attempt at coordinating policies.⁵

³Pegg, p.4.

⁴Victor Hugo, quoted in Pegg, p.4.

⁵Schuman, Frederick L. International Politics (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1958), p.207.

The desire for peace and the reality of nationalism are especially relevant to the two events most responsible for serious deliberation and ultimately creation of a concrete European federation: the first and second World Wars. The breakdown of the Austro-Hungarian Empire under the weight of nationalist movements led to a bloody and tiring struggle that depleted most of Europe of its economic resources, especially manpower. This "war to end all wars" shocked many Europeans and reinforced the pacifists' belief that a nation-state left to its own devices was not stable enough; it needed the support of other nation-states, or indeed of a higher form of government.

While various scholars continued to promote the idea of a European federation, not much progress was made in the period between the World Wars. Aggravating the economic problems caused by the war, the depression of the 1930s led citizens of Europe to withdraw from the outside world and to focus on their domestic problems. The success of national-socialism in Germany, which apparently caught some of the Europeans by surprise,⁶ put a temporary halt to hopes that a united Europe would soon form.

The First World War demoralized the citizens of Europe; the second outraged them. The majority across Europe called for measures of prevention, to avoid the recurrence of such

⁶Pegg, p.32.

atrocities. Negotiations for a united Europe began as soon as peace was declared.

In France under the Fourth Republic, which was born at the end of World War II, foreign policy had two main goals: first, to re-establish status and security with regard to Germany and second, to establish security vis-a-vis the Soviet Union.⁷ These somewhat contradictory goals came together in the ideal of Europe. By binding Germany in a system of regulations, politicians hoped to keep the country stable. A united Europe including Germany would be much more able to stand up to the Soviet Union. In 1947 when the first processing of a Marshall Plan Aid request took place, one condition for approval stated that each of the countries should be dependent on a broader European organization, on the setting up of a European Community.⁸ Thus was established the relationship of interdependency among the countries of Western Europe.

The first step toward European integration on a larger scale was the Schuman Plan, named after the French Foreign Minister who made it public. It was actually devised by Jean Monnet, head of the French Economic Planning Commission

⁷Grosser, Alfred. French Foreign Policy under de Gaulle, trans. Lois Ames Pattison (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1965), p.2.

⁸Nicoll, William. Understanding the European Communities (Savage, MD: Barnes & Noble Books, 1990), p.7.

and today known as "The Father of Europe."⁹ Monnet had been involved in efforts to get the French post-war economy moving again but had found his abilities limited:

For five years the whole French nation had been making efforts to recreate the bases of production, but it became evident that to go beyond recovery towards steady expansion and higher standards of life for all, the resources of a single nation were not sufficient. It was necessary to transcend the national framework.

Monnet intended to apply the principles of economic cooperation to a wide range of products, but in most immediate need were the coal and steel markets.

The strategic importance of coal and steel in fuel and weapons production, combined with the desire to keep France and Germany from going to war again, led to the first attempt at a European Community. Monnet decided to turn over all aspects of the coal and steel market to "supranational stewardship,"¹⁰ which the 1951 Treaty of Paris established as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). A group of politicians, selected by their member countries, would form a High Authority, independent of the member governments. This body would decide on the fair market price, eventually eliminating customs barriers and tariffs between countries. Ideally, the ECSC would have

⁹George, Stephen. Politics and Policy in the Economic Community (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p.4.

¹⁰Nicoll, p.8.

controlled production as well, but the member countries' delegates believed less in Monnet's supranationalism than in the creation of a free market. The ECSC became a free-trade union rather than a truly higher government, much to Monnet's chagrin.

After leaving the ECSC, Monnet formed the Action Committee for the United States of Europe, an international pressure group composed of politicians, business leaders and union representatives. This group originally focused on creating a European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom). Monnet was still searching for a supranational organization; perhaps he believed that member countries would more readily give up national sovereignty to a commission that controlled atomic capabilities.

At the same time, the Dutch and Belgian governments brought forth the idea of a common market. Monnet expressed caution at this development; he was an advocate of taking incremental steps toward a community, and he thought that the new plan went too quickly. Soon, however, the destinies of his Euratom and the Dutch/Belgian European Economic Community were interconnected. One prospective member, West Germany, wanted to expand its market through the trade union but feared the possibility of an atomic community that France would control. France, on the other hand, was apprehensive of the entry into its domestic market of

foreign products but eager to participate in Euratom. In the end each country gave in to the other's wishes in a compromise that foreshadowed future negotiations. Guidelines for the new Communities were established by the Treaty of Rome in 1957.

Each Community had its own government, modeled after that of the ECSC, with minor changes. In the ECSC, the High Authority, which originally had been planned as a true supranational power, had deferred to the Council of Ministers, which was composed of Ministers of Industry in the ECSC. The changes reflected this situation. The High Authority of the ECSC was now called the Commission, which with respect to the European Council had no independent area of action. Its role was to make proposals to the Council of Ministers, who then would decide on a course of action among themselves. Although originally the Ministers made decisions by unanimous agreement, the Treaty of Rome called for eventual majority rule, which would give more power to the Council.

The creation of a unified Europe was not an easy task. In addition to the necessity of cooperation with five other governments, each member faced domestic pressures on its policy. This difficulty is apparent in the conflict over ratification of the European Defense Community, which some

observers saw as an important step toward a political community.

While the NATO Treaty signing took place on April 4, 1949, the NATO integrated command was not established until 1955. Before that date the Americans made an effort to create an integrated force made up of French, British, Italian--and German--troops. The European countries, especially France, alarmed at the prospect of a rearmed Germany, called for the creation of a European Defense Community. They hoped such a Community would bind Germany with rules and regulations. Signing took place in 1952. Ratification by individual governments was more difficult.

In France under the Fourth Republic, any vote in Parliament could become a vote of confidence whereby the members could express their opinion of the government. Such votes often followed scandals or issues of great importance. Although it was certainly important, the ratification of the EDC Treaty in France did not become a vote of confidence, due to the decision of Pierre Mendes-France, then Prime Minister. Writes John Hess in The Case for de Gaulle, "Mendes never openly opposed EDC, but against enormous pressure he refused to make ratification an issue of confidence in the government."¹¹ Whereas normally a member

¹¹Hess, John L. The Case for De Gaulle (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1968), p.91.

of Parliament would have used his vote to register his opinion of the government, in this instance Parliament was left to its own conscience. A majority--composed of centrists, Communists and Gaullists for the most part--voted against the Treaty.

The unlikely alliance described above is not as anomalous as might seem at first glance. The Communists, whose policy often coincided with that of de Gaulle, opposed the supranational European Community, especially in its potential role as a power on the order of the Soviet Union, and believed instead in the primacy of French independence. The Communists resisted the Socialist interpretation of a supranational Europe, in which Europe was a "Third Force" that would exist between the United States and the Soviet Union, aligned with neither superpower.

In addition, the Socialists supported EDC because of its reformist rather than revolutionary status. Historian Charles Micaud writes that the "new Europe" would have excluded the Communists:

For the new Europe would have been an anti-Communist Europe; the Communists would have been excluded from all key posts and would have lost their prospects for an eventual seizure of power. The benefit to the Socialists of this long-term perspective was very much present in the minds of the Socialist deputies when they backed the Common Market in Parliament a few years later.¹²

¹²Micaud, Charles. Communism and the Left (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Pub., 1963), p.211.

While historian Maurice Duverger wrote that the Socialistes Français de l'Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO) were chasing a myth of supranational Europe in order to "escape an unbearable reality by finding a refuge in an imaginary world,"¹³ those who voted against EDC might also be accused of refusing to acknowledge French interdependence with the other five member countries. One such person was Charles de Gaulle, whose outlook on France, and on the country's role in Europe and the world, would alter French politics for decades.

De Gaulle and Gaullism

In the post-World War II atmosphere of a search for supranational governments, the coming to power of Charles de Gaulle was anathema to the EEC's member countries. Although de Gaulle's government of the newly established Fifth Republic swore to uphold the treaties that had been signed under the Fourth, his interpretation of the end result of those documents differed from that originally proposed by the treaties' authors. His conception of France's role in the world altered French politics for decades.

De Gaulle's foreign policy seems to have been based on the notion of French grandeur, a word that means "greatness" but also connotes lofty goals and a brilliant past. This

¹³Ibid.

greatness generally applied to France--not the France of geography books but the France of literature, the arts and philosophy. France's grandeur is larger than the sum of her citizens, according to de Gaulle:

Providence has created her either for complete successes or for exemplary misfortunes. If in spite of this, mediocrity shows in her acts and deeds, it strikes me as an absurd anomaly, to be imputed to the faults of Frenchmen, not to the genius of the land.¹⁴

While the French people exist within French territory, they alone do not make up France. They are capable of acting against the interests of the French nation--the interests of this ethereal, goddess-like France. This national interest, which can exist apart from the domestic interests of the French people, definable at any time and visible to those leaders who do the will of France, is descended from a Jacobin outlook common to French politics since the Revolution.¹⁵

France's position in the world is the foremost concern of her public servants, who subsume all other interests to the international interests of France. In his Memoirs de Gaulle underlines this point:

¹⁴Gaulle, Charles de, quoted in Kulski, W.W. De Gaulle and the World (Syracuse, NY: University Press, 1966), p.3.

¹⁵Note, for example, this quotation from a report by Robespierre on the political situation in November, 1793: "The French Republic is as invincible as reason, as immortal as truth."

In each of the political, social or economic sectors, [Frenchmen] make their interests subservient to the superior interests of France.¹⁶

One way for France to improve her position is to increase her power and influence in the world. Certainly a country perceived as weak will not gain respect among its allies, and an unstable domestic situation often leads to problems with international commitments.

The importance of foreign policy to de Gaulle is evident in the above statements. Since the pursuit of power is France's mission, according to de Gaulle, and since de Gaulle is the spokesman for France's interests as well as the head of state, his first responsibility is to improve France's position in the world. De Gaulle often left domestic affairs to his Prime Minister and the Cabinet, a tradition that continues today, although not to the same extent.

The primary actor in foreign policy, in de Gaulle's eyes, was the State. The regime within the State was transitory, but the State was eternal. For example, de Gaulle spoke of "the regime that presently dominates China" during his press conference of Jan. 31, 1964.¹⁷ This State existed as China in the same way that France existed, as a evocation of that country's history, achievements and

¹⁶Gaulle, Charles de, quoted in Grosser, p.16.

¹⁷Grosser, p.18.

peoples. According to Alfred Grosser, a French scholar, this way of thinking accounts for de Gaulle's preference for bilateral agreements. While this appears to be true in certain cases, such as when de Gaulle negotiated the Franco-Soviet Treaty with Stalin in 1944 and refused to admit Churchill to the talks, it is true that at times de Gaulle appeared to promote what W.W. Kulski calls "world government by the five nuclear powers [of the U.N. Security Council]." ¹⁸ De Gaulle certainly felt that among many heads of state agreement was difficult to attain without a good deal of compromise. He hesitated on the subject of expanding the EEC to cover a wider area because he knew that more members worrying about their position within the Community meant longer discussions or more confrontations. It is important for the reader to keep in mind that de Gaulle did not follow one set policy other than that of defense of the French national interest; he tended to change his opinion based on the situation of the moment.

Since the State ideally was the legitimate decision maker in world politics, de Gaulle found it difficult to imagine a higher power. Foremost in his foreign policy was the importance of autonomy and independence. This stance not only made the problem of European political union a difficult one; it also caused concern among those countries

¹⁸Kulski, p.389.

who might have sought to influence European (and by consequence, French) foreign and eventually domestic policy, especially the United States and the Soviet Union. Charles E. Bohlen, United States Ambassador to France in 1967, observed that "[de Gaulle] likes to think of power relations like solar systems. He just doesn't think a small- or medium-sized country should get too close to a great power; it would get pulled into its orbit."¹⁹ This statement is as true for the European Community as it is for the two superpowers. De Gaulle did not want to get "pulled into the orbit" of a Europe that professed a close alliance with one of the superpowers. This fear was especially apparent in the case of British entry into the European Communities; de Gaulle thought it would bring Europe too close to the United States.

De Gaulle seems to have championed some supranationality under the Fourth Republic. In December 1951 he spoke of "a common confederal power to which each [country] delegates a part of its sovereignty, in particular in the fields of economy, defense and culture."²⁰ In May 1952: "A United Europe? Of course! But it would have to be

¹⁹Bohlen, Charles E., quoted in Hess, p.2.

²⁰Reynaud, Paul. The Foreign Policy of Charles de Gaulle: a Critical Assessment, trans. Mervyn Savill (New York: Odyssey Press, 1964), p.25.

a genuine confederation."²¹ When a party is out of power, its leaders make statements about their intentions, in the hope that such statements will attract members and votes to their platform; that party's outlook changes, however, when it reaches power, due to the realities of governing. When de Gaulle made these statements, he obviously thought that membership in a supranational European organization would be beneficial for France. Upon taking office, however, he reassessed the situation and decided that France's interest lay in protecting her needs much more closely.

Thus, under the Fifth Republic, the French President took a different position on Europe. Instead of a supranational government for the EEC, de Gaulle spoke of cooperation among the member states. Foremost in his outlook was the importance of unanimous decision over majority voting in the Council of Ministers, an organ within the European Economic Community that unites the Foreign Ministers from each country. Originally, the Treaty of Rome called for unanimous voting in the first years of the community, and for majority voting thereafter. In an ideal situation unanimity would require each country to make concessions until the members reach a common solution; however, since an uncontested decision was required for policymaking, one country's refusal to compromise could lead

²¹Ibid.

to a standstill in negotiations. Invariably, it seems, that country was France. Some historians claim to measure the other members' commitment to Europe by their eventual surrender to French demands, and it does appear that the pattern of French stubbornness, withdrawal and eventual victory was a familiar one in European affairs in the 1960s.

De Gaulle spoke often of "Anglo-Saxon" influence in Europe, by which he was referring to the United States' close alliance with Great Britain. He believed that British officials preferred to deal with the Americans rather than with the Continent, i.e., the rest of Europe. One such example is the Polaris missile issue. In 1963 de Gaulle had hopes of sharing nuclear technology with Britain; France had not yet developed nuclear warheads, and Britain was more advanced in this area. Shortly thereafter, British Prime Minister Macmillan went to a conference in Nassau with American President Kennedy, where the President offered missiles to the Prime Minister. When he agreed, de Gaulle was outraged. The French President saw this action as proof that Great Britain was not ready to join Europe.

Agriculture was also a major factor in de Gaulle's decision to veto British entry. As a sector of the economy, agriculture was more important in France than in Great Britain; France was close to self-sufficiency and its potential not yet fully realized. French farmers were eager

for new markets. As the leader of the United Kingdom, however, Great Britain imported much of its food, especially meat and butter from New Zealand. These countries received special customs tariffs in Britain. De Gaulle made British entry conditional on full acceptance of the Treaty of Rome, which in the case of agriculture called for lower tariffs within the Community and higher tariffs to non-member countries. Britain asked for compromises, which de Gaulle refused to give. Some critics think that de Gaulle was merely making excuses, while others say that the British people were glad of the veto since they knew they were not ready for membership.

The crisis of 1965 , which stemmed from agriculture-related issues, at the time seemed to threaten the collapse of the Community as well. The European Commission had estimated Community income from the Value Added Tax²² and from percentages perceived on imports from non-EEC countries (as a punishment to importing countries) and discovered a surplus. It decided to give the power of controlling these funds to the European Parliament. De Gaulle, ever alert to hints of supranationality, refused to agree on this issue and eventually withdrew his representative from the Council of Ministers. While France could not afford to relinquish membership of the EEC, the other countries did not want to

²²A type of sales tax which Community citizens pay on non-essential items.

lose France as a partner. Eventually both sides made compromises, although de Gaulle retained the right to veto decisions "when national interest is at stake" as well as the right to determine such circumstances. The unanimous-decision requirement was extended indefinitely.

The French Left in the Early Days of the Fifth Republic

Gaullism succeeded in France because nationalism was not discouraged in post-war France. All Frenchmen, from the members of the leftist Resistance to de Gaulle's followers, believed in France's role as bearer of the torch of revolutionary values. The parties of the Left were attracted to specific tenets of Gaullism, however, and not to the whole doctrine. The Left's own ideas on Europe prevented leftist unity and caused the opposition to weaken under Gaullist rule. From 1958 to 1972 the Left struggled with these issues, as we shall see in the next section.

Under the Fourth Republic (1947-1958) in France, the Left was obviously a dominant, albeit divided force. The Socialists under the Fourth Republic were an important part of government, while the Communists increasingly took on a pro-Soviet role in the opposition. With the fall of the Fourth Republic after the Algerian crisis, the establishment of the Fifth Republic under Charles de Gaulle changed the country's image of the non-Communist left. More than ten

years after the war's end, the former Resistance fighters were no longer perceived as heroes; now, they were responsible for the crisis and for a Republic that had witnessed a parade of governments, the average lifetime of which was six months. The Left found itself stripped of honor.

In the early years of the Fifth Republic, until the early 1960s, the left was splintered and fragmented into small groups that by themselves had no power but could not seem to cooperate. In the context of European policy, cooperation was impossible because of the Third Force idea, in which Europe would be an independent force between the United States and the Soviet Union.²³ Sue Ellen Charlton, in her study of French leftist unity and European integration, argues that "the Socialists turned to European cooperation as a way of escaping the internal frustrations of dealing with the Communists."²⁴ Later in the Fifth Republic, the two groups moved toward unity as the Socialists adopted Communist vocabulary and the Communists tried to show a more liberal face. In this section I will focus on these issues in the context of Gaullist rule.

²³ Charlton, Sue Ellen. The French Left and European Integration (Denver: The University of Denver Press, 1972), p.40.

²⁴ Ibid.

Perhaps because the Left had recognized de Gaulle as the leader of the French Resistance during the Second World War,²⁵ and also because of the chaos surrounding the Algerian crisis, de Gaulle's rise to power was originally approved by the SFIO. In fact, states Dorothy Pickles in her commentary on Gaullist defense policy, almost every party agreed with some aspects of de Gaulle's outlook on Europe:

The Communists welcomed both anti-NATO and anti-European gestures (as did considerable elements of the Non-Communist Left). "Europeans". . .welcomed Gaullist claims for a "European" role which they hoped might claim to be a "twin pillar" in the Atlantic Alliance [i.e., on a par with the Americans].²⁶

It is important to note that the two forces chose the elements of Gaullist policy that most suited their own platforms. Other issues, such as universal suffrage for the European Parliament or majority voting in the Council of Ministers, divided the Socialists from the Gaullists. The Communists' intransigence on the issue of cooperation with the rest of Europe often led the party to the absurd position of arguing that the government's policies were not Gaullist enough.

²⁵Micaud, p.195.

²⁶Pickles, Dorothy, "Conflict and Consensus in France," West European Politics, October 1978, p.118.

In the first two years of the Fifth Republic, the Communists and Socialists regarded each other with suspicion, which was mainly due to the SFIO's participation in the first year of the Gaullist government. This participation was apparently based on gratitude to de Gaulle for ending the Algerian crisis. Moreover, the Socialists had originally believed that de Gaulle's constitution was a temporary document and that he would eventually give power back to Parliament. The SFIO eventually voted against ratification of the constitution and left the government in 1959.

The Socialists changed their approach to European policy as well. Whereas in the 1950s they had concentrated on encouraging the British to enter the European Community, to form a coalition of European labor parties, in the 1960s they emphasized "maintaining the integrity of the institutions,"²⁷ since de Gaulle's European policy seemed to threaten the existence of those institutions. Support for British membership, which seemed impossible after de Gaulle's two vetoes of 1963 and 1967, was postponed until more favorable circumstances.²⁸ In addition the Socialists gave up the Third Force idea, turning their attention toward the Atlantic Alliance. This action might have alarmed the

²⁷Charlton, p.43.

²⁸Kulski, p.248.

Communists, who believed that Atlanticism meant American hegemony and Capitalist domination. On the other hand, it meant that the Socialists were not setting Europe up as a direct opponent of the Soviet Union.

After the 1962 legislative elections showed that the parties had lost electors, the Socialists altered their platform in a shift to the left in preparation ostensibly for the 1965 presidential elections. This platform "included allegiance to the concept of European integration, yet. . . did not alienate the Communists."²⁹ The Left's candidate, François Mitterrand, borrowed the vocabulary of the PCF to discuss problems within Europe. For example, he said it was necessary to avoid a "Europe of cartels," which the Communists had been saying for several years.³⁰ However, he also claimed to favor a federated Europe as well as universal suffrage within the European organs. While the PCF probably saw this statement as indicative of support for supranationality, Mitterrand added that universal suffrage was necessary in order to "guard against monopolies,"³¹ another phrase that enjoyed favor with the Communists. Finally, the Left's candidate promoted opening Europe for improved relations with the Communist-bloc nations.

²⁹Charlton, p.60.

³⁰Charlton, p.61.

³¹Ibid.

At the same time that the Socialists were adapting Communist vocabulary to their needs, the Communists were making an effort to break out of their isolation and asking for a common democratic program. The PCF had taken a pro-Soviet stance from the 1920s.

Mitterrand was then leader of the *Convention des Institutions Republicaines*, one of many Socialist groups. He had been described as a "brilliant, incisive and caustic critic."³² Under the Fifth Republic Mitterrand became one of the leading opponents of the Right; he was an obvious choice as candidate for president. Without a strong base of support, however, Mitterrand knew he had no chance of winning; therefore, he established the *Fédération de la Gauche Démocrate et Socialiste* (FGDS) in 1964 as a means to coordinate his election. It united the old and weak SFIO with more youthful organizations such as the *Parti Socialiste Unifié*, which had a younger and more intellectual membership. Mitterrand's platform offered no specific goals; historian François Dreyfus wrote that he "railed against Gaullism but was imprecise on the subject of his platform: he announced that he would dissolve the National Assembly and affirmed his Europeanism."³³ Mitterrand forced

³²Wright, p.47.

³³Dreyfus, François G. Histoire des Gauches en France 1940-1974 (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1975), p.264. Quote translated by the author.

the election to a second round but received only 40 per cent of the votes.

Charlton argues that "while the issue of European integration was not a major factor in preventing any coalition or agreement, it contributed to strengthening unity which was already formed on domestic issues."³⁴ Domestic issues came first in discussions since the Left was in opposition and politically weak. The majority of their potential members had only general opinions about Europe but strong preferences on domestic policy, and so to attract a wider base of support, the parties concentrated on the national situation. A more detailed international outlook would come later, as the union of the Left gained power and inched closer to presidential victory. In addition, Charlton implies in this statement that in exchange for an agreement with the Socialists on domestic issues, the Communists "traded off" the issue of European integration, which was important to the FGDS.³⁵ This plan of action was true throughout the period from 1965-1968, as the Left struggled to put together a written agreement.

Such an agreement was produced in February, 1968. Unlike the Common Program, which emerged in 1972, this document was not a platform for common government. It

³⁴Charlton, p.56.

³⁵Charlton, p.63.

functioned "to clarify the areas of consensus between the two groups. . .the differences on various policies were carefully specified."³⁶ The entente between the Socialists and the Communists did not last long. The events of May-June 1968, during which a student revolt escalated into widespread strikes and angry criticism of government policies, shocked all members of the Left as well as of the government and brought an end to discussions between the two groups. From 1968 to 1970 the Left experienced a "period of open antagonism."³⁷ among its constituents.

The non-Communist Left recognized that in order to be on equal standing with the Communists, they would have to unify. The major impetus in creating such an alliance was the Congress at Epinay in 1971. On this occasion the contemporary Socialist Party was born, although most scholars point out that the groundwork had been accomplished in 1969 at the Congress of Issy-les-Moulineaux.³⁸ At this congress and at subsequent congresses, which are held every two years, the Party was formed and strengthened.

The Party contains five factions, noted here in order from weakest to most influential: ex-Gaullists and left-wing

³⁶Charlton, p.63.

³⁷Nugent, Neill. The Left in France (New York: MacMillan Press, 1982), p.165.

³⁸Wright, p.222.

Catholics; members of left-wing clubs; Ex-PSU members whose leader is Michel Rocard; members of the former SFIO; Members of the Centre d'Etudes, de Recherches et d'Education Socialistes (CERES); and Mitterrand's own CIR, the dominant force. The strength of each faction, however, depends on one or more of the others.

In 1971 the newly united Socialist Party again approached the PCF in the hope of forming a union of the Left. The 1969 referendum, which de Gaulle had lost, most likely played a role in this action. De Gaulle had interpreted this loss as a sign that his support was no longer cohesive. The government continued with another, more moderate Gaullist, Georges Pompidou, who allowed the British to enter the EEC shortly after taking office. Perhaps the Left thought it had another chance at gaining power; perhaps enough time had passed since 1968 to allow for reconciliation.

In any event, in 1971 the leftist parties began negotiations on a Common Program of Government, this time a true platform. The Socialists moved away from their support for European supranationality, which has been described in this chapter, to bring their policies in line with those of the Communists. In this chapter we have also seen that Gaullism was a powerful force in France from its inception; the beginnings of continuity are evident in the new

document. This Program will be examined in more depth in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: The Common Program

The Common Program represents an effort to strengthen the Left in the hope of consolidating votes and gaining political power. The Communists and Socialists, and to a lesser extent the Left Radicals, claimed that the Program was a guide for government, a platform that would help to ease the transition to power. As the Left could not be sure of the exact date of victory, it was impossible to tailor the document to the contemporary situation. As a document referring to European policy, the Common Program is therefore necessarily vague. It is of vital importance in the history of leftist policy, however, because it represents the first and only close collaboration between the newly-formed Socialist Party and the Communist Party. Scholars generally date the beginning of the Left's rise to power from the year of the Program's signing, and for this reason it is important to analyze the European policy of the document.

To understand the nature of the Common Program one must first account for the forces that compelled the leftist parties to unite. The first part of this chapter will attempt to address these issues as well as the ideological differences between the parties that made the alliance an uneasy one. Since such information could fill an entire

chapter on its own, I will provide only enough detail for the reader to learn why the Common Program was necessary as well as why its authors ultimately failed in their effort to establish union.

Treatment of European policy in the Common Program is my main subject for this chapter and therefore will occupy a large portion. Each end of the Leftist spectrum claimed the compromises obtained from the other as a victory, and the respective influences of the Socialists and Communists are visible in the document. The Common Program is a model with which to compare leftist policy after the assumption of executive power.

Finally, one must keep in perspective the importance of the Common Program. Despite the prevalent feeling that the Common Program would keep the Union of the Left in harmony, leaders of both parties assured their members that the document was merely a political necessity. A final section of this chapter will look more closely at this situation and at the gradual undoing of leftist union.

Impetuses Toward Political Union

The Constitution of the Fifth Republic, which was largely written by de Gaulle and his cronies,¹ eliminated

¹Hoffmann, Stanley. "The French Constitution of 1958: I. The Final Text and its Prospects," American Political Science Review, 1958.

the system of parliamentary sovereignty and gave more power to the president. During the Fourth Republic, Parliament used its votes of confidence to topple prime ministers at the "slightest sign of crisis or incompetence."² It was a system that seemed "designed to ensure the survival of the weakest."³ Under the Fifth, the President reserved the right to dissolve Parliament if the body showed signs of conflict with the Executive's wishes. The office of President had formerly been a mere figurehead; the new constitution gave France's leader powers approaching dictatorship "in times of national crisis."⁴

The Fifth Republic's electoral system favored centrist coalitions and discriminated against extremists. As a close copy of that used under the Third Republic,⁵ the system requires candidates to receive fifty per cent plus one of the votes cast and not less than twenty-five per cent of all registered votes. On the second ballot candidates need only obtain a plurality. Those first-ballot presentees who attract less than a minimum percentage of the votes are eliminated. During presidential elections, a two-ballot

²Wright, Vincent. The Government and Politics of France, 3rd ed. (New York: Holmes and Meier Pubs., Inc., 1982), p.9.

³Ibid.

⁴This is Article 16 of the Constitution.

⁵Nugent, Neill. The Left in France (New York: MacMillan Press, 1982), p.148.

system is again used, but only the two leading candidates on the first ballot may proceed to the second. In The Struggle for Unity, Neill Nugent refers to this system as "institutional bipolarization."⁶ Politicians must draw support from a broad segment of the population. Coalitions with minor parties are also essential because members of these parties typically cast their votes for whichever candidate the party leaders endorse.

The Fifth Republic's president-oriented system meant that the Socialists and the Communists would need to form a coalition to win elections. At the very least, one party would have to pledge support to the other in second-ballot situations. Each party could benefit from qualities of the other. For example, in post-World War II France, a majority of the French public feared the access of Communists to political power. By allying with and making concessions to the Socialists, the Communist Party assured itself a more moderate image. François Mitterrand's newly-formed Socialist Party needed increased membership, which it hoped to gain from sympathetic members of the PCF.

Reconciling the two parties' ideologies was extremely difficult. Tensions between the two movements dated back to the 1920 Congress at Tours, during which the Socialists refused to accept Communist resolutions. The main subject

⁶Nugent, p.150.

of contention was the method to follow when putting into place a leftist government. The Socialists favored a reformist approach, in which the newly elected Left would work within the previously established framework in order to effect change. Denouncing the Socialists as "leaning toward the right," an epithet that approaches sacrilege in leftist circles, the Communists took a different stance. They sought a complete renovation of governmental structures, otherwise called a revolutionary strategy. Many non-Communist politicians feared that once the PCF assumed power, its leaders would not respect the vote of the people and the subsequent transfer of power called alternance.⁷

The revolutionary attitude of the PCF toward the Fifth Republic's institutions may have been due in part to the Left's belief that de Gaulle's assumption of power was a temporary evil. In this context a complete revision of political institutions would occur as soon as the international situation had calmed. As the Fifth Republic remained intact and years passed, both parties realized that they would need to accept the concept of alternance so as not to be perceived as a threat to political stability. The

⁷Alternance refers to the exchanging of roles within a political system, usually from a party in power to an opposition party. The French electorate feared that if the PCF lost an election, its leaders would refuse to honor the system of alternance and would try to remain in power.

softening of PCF ideology combined with political pressures (e.g., the electoral system) led to partnership on the Left.

European Policy in the Common Program

In the field of European policy, reconciling Socialist reformism and Communist revolutionary attitudes was as difficult as in domestic policy. The Socialists had traditionally been in favor of a federated Europe while the Communists were wary of any plan that seemed to suppress national sovereignty. A good example of these differences is the campaign surrounding the EEC referendum of April, 1972, on the accession to the EEC of Great Britain, Denmark, Ireland and Norway. Then-President Georges Pompidou was hoping to excite Communist opposition to the referendum in order to legitimize British accession for his Gaullist Party, many of whose members were still loyal to the memory of de Gaulle's persistent veto on British entry. The Socialists, on the other hand, hoped that the PCF would follow their lead and abstain from rather than oppose the vote. The resulting difference of opinion led to a suspension of Common Program related negotiations, while no agreement was made on the exact course to follow.⁸

⁸Criddle, Byron, and D.S. Bell. The French Socialist Party, 2nd Ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p.71.

After the referendum negotiations continued, with the Communists seemingly willing to make concessions to the Socialists. George Criddle notes that the PCF essentially acknowledged the Community and the Treaty of Rome as a "fact" while at the same time it called for democratization, by which it meant pursuit of workers' demands and retention of freedom of action for a French Left government. The compromise apparent in the Common Program reflects aspects of both parties' opinions.

The agreement is evident as soon as the first line of "Chapter IV: France and the European Economic Community." The document states that "the government will have a double objective on the subject of the EEC."⁹ Half of this objective is to recognize the basic institutions of the Community. The leftist government will participate in the construction of all aspects of the EEC with the goal of

liberating it from the domination of big capital, democratizing its institutions and orienting community projects in the direction of workers' demands.¹⁰

Of course France, even as a powerful and founding member of the union, could not act on her own in completely remaking

⁹Common Program for Government (Paris: Flammarion, 1973), p.85.

¹⁰Common Program, p.85.

Europe; the French veto¹¹ would not succeed in these circumstances. As a political statement, therefore, these few lines of the Program were a small victory for the PS. It had succeeded in making the PCF recognize the EEC; the Socialists believed in this victory long after the collapse of leftist union.

The PCF was able to claim victory as well, since the second part of the double objective states that France will "preserve her liberty of action in the Common Market for the realization of the political, economic and social program."¹² The Communists had long feared the possibility of an America-dominated Europe that would dictate French policy or force French domestic policy to conform to European rules. Now, it appeared that the Socialists had also recognized this problem. The Program further states that the government will be responsible for its European policy to the National Assembly only. This statement essentially means that the French Left completely rejected integration into a united European political union. A "United States of Europe" was out of the question. The Left's proposal is analogous to an American state's arrogation of the ability to reject or approve federal

¹¹See Chapter One for a discussion of Charles de Gaulle's use of the veto in European Economic Community affairs.

¹²Common Program, p.85.

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¹²Common Program, p.85.

policy. A French Left government clearly would wish to guard its political autonomy.

On the subject of Common Agricultural Policy, the authors of the Common Program take a distinctly pro-worker stance. Both parties wanted to expand the CAP to cover social issues, asking that it guarantee

a standard of living and satisfying future to agricultural workers, especially in the most numerous categories and the least able to take advantage until now of the policy of pricing.¹³

One might ask to which categories the Program refers. By "most numerous," one could suppose that dairy products and wines are implied here. The farmers in these areas might also be those least able to take advantage of the policy of pricing.

If the authors of the program meant to emphasize certain sectors, why then did they neglect to mention them by name? Here one should remember the major goal of the Common Program. The Socialists and Communists hoped not only to win support for their policies; they wished to broaden their base of membership. By making unclear statements about which groups would benefit from the policy, the Program's authors targeted all agricultural sectors. Each would believe that it had received unfair treatment and

¹³Common Program, p.87.

thus would more readily subscribe to the Common Program's agricultural policy.

The realization of social policy is of great importance to the authors of the Common Program. A great deal of space is allocated to discussion of the Economic and Social Committee. This committee has a membership consisting of "representatives of Governments, trade unions and employers; organizations."¹⁴ These members generally exemplify the management side of labor; the Program's authors wanted to see "a more equitable representation of workers."¹⁵ In this plan one half of the committee's members would come from labor unions while the above-mentioned organizations would make up the other half.

Helping the worker is a goal of both the Communist and the Socialist parties, but here again the Program reflects a compromise between reform and revolution. Because the Socialist party's membership covers middle-management groups as well as moderate labor unions such as the CFDT, government by the workers may have seemed less plausible to its leaders. The concept of autogestion, which implies economic empowerment as well as management by the workers, was an issue of contention within the Socialist Party.

¹⁴Treaties Establishing the European Communities.
(Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Community, 1987), p.382.

¹⁵Common Program, p.86.

Since the actual debates during creation of the Common Program have not been widely publicized, it is difficult to say exactly which party was more pro-labor in its stance. One can say with a fair amount of certainty, however, that the Communists are more likely to have pushed for mention of European labor policy, given their membership and general belief that empowerment of workers was necessary to democratization.

Modifying the Committee's membership would of course not be enough to change European labor policy overall; the Committee's role within the Community also required change, according to the Program's authors. The role given to the Committee was a purely advisory one; the Treaty of Rome states that "the Committee may be consulted by [the Council or by the Commission] in all cases in which they consider it appropriate."¹⁶ No mention is made of the validity of the Committee's decision, that is, whether the institutions may reject the decision or must accept it. The Common Program's authors clearly state that the Committee must play a more prominent role in European social policy. "It should have the right of initiative in any study or proposition concerning the workers,"¹⁷ the Program notes. It further suggests that the institutions should obligatorily consult

¹⁶Treaties, p.384.

¹⁷Common Program, p.86.

the Committee "on all the projects having consequences for workers or for the economy."¹⁸ To achieve this goal, the parties say they will revise all articles referring to workers' rights.

While the concept of workers' rights may have been a traditional part of Communist ideology, the Socialists recognized the need to broaden their base of voters. We have seen that the mention of workers' issues in the Common Program, or at least the importance of workers' issues, could be interpreted as a concession to the Communists by the Socialists. On the other hand, the idea of amending the Treaty of Rome, of working within the Community, was a Socialist victory. The Communists had customarily promoted French independence vis-a-vis the Community; their way of changing policy, one might assume, would be to refuse to participate in European activities until change occurred. The decision to reform European institutions from within reflected a change in attitude on the part of the Communists.

On the subject of political union the Common Program is vague; it mentions foreign policy only. This lack of coherent policy reveals several aspects of the problem of political union within Europe. It is possible that in 1972 political union was not foremost in discussion in a

¹⁸Ibid.

Community that had not yet established monetary union. The debate over the form of political union had already begun, with the first negotiations on the nature of the Community. Perhaps the Program's authors thought that foreign policy designed by the French would be an acceptable form of political union.

Political cooperation was a great obstacle to agreement between the Communists and the Socialists; this is also clear from the brevity of the statement. We have seen that the two parties had opposing views on the extent to which France should cooperate within the European Community. While the two parties' leaders may have been able to agree on policy issues, they may not have been able to compromise on a subject that could have had far-reaching implications for France's domestic policies as well as its international agreements.

Also of importance in the context of this paper is the lack of a statement related to the European Monetary System. Apparently the Program's authors, if they knew about the October talks, did not want to make an advance judgement. It will be necessary, therefore, to provide some background on this subject in a future chapter.

The Importance of the Program

The Socialists interpreted the Common Program as a victory in their struggle for increased political power, while the Communists saw it as an advanced stage in the evolution of French democracy. This clash of expectations led to further disagreement over the exact nature of leftist union.

Nugent notes in his book that left-wing unity reached its zenith during the two-year period following the signing of the Common Program.¹⁹ He bases this judgement on electoral agreements within the Left in which the PCF and PS agreed to throw their votes behind the leading leftist candidate in a second-ballot situation. In the 1973 legislative elections, for example, the Left drew 45.8 per cent of the votes--the highest percentage since 1956. In 1974, running against Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, François Mitterrand emerged as the sole candidate for the Left and narrowly lost the race by a margin of 0.7 per cent.

These electoral agreements were built on a tenuous foundation. A day or two after the signing of the Common Program, both major leaders, Georges Marchais and François Mitterrand, made statements to their constituents that ran counter to their public image. Mitterrand announced from

¹⁹Nugent, p.170.

Vienna that he intended to rebuild the Socialist Party "on the ground occupied by the PCF itself."²⁰ He estimated that the PS could eventually hope to win over sixty percent of the PCF's membership. At practically the same time as the Vienna announcement, although it would not become public knowledge until 1975, Georges Marchais confronted the Central Committee. He argued that the Socialist Party's sincerity and decisiveness on leftist unity must not be taken for granted; a strong Communist Party would be the main factor in implementing the Common Program. He further dismissed some of the concessions in the document as "essentially formal."²¹

Both forces of the leftist union thus recognized that the Common Program was an imperfect document. They appeared to believe that only a strong party could obtain the policy compromises involved in Union of the Left. This period saw both parties launch massive membership-recruitment drives, especially on the part of the PCF. Negotiating from strength, the two parties supposed, was the only way to ensure control of the Common Program and thus of voters who might be attracted to the Program's policies.

Although on the surface the 1973 and 1974 elections appear to represent the supposed harmony of Union of the

²⁰Nugent, p.171.

²¹Nugent, p.171.

Left, they also reveal deepening changes in the relative balance of power between the two parties. In the 1973 elections the PCF received merely 0.6 per cent more of the leftist vote than the Socialists, as opposed to 3.5 per cent more in 1968. The Union for Socialist Democracy, which included the Mouvement des Radicaux de Gauche, had made significant inroads into Communist bastions such as the working class in order to achieve this gain. Furthermore, in 1974, Mitterrand "barely mentioned the Common Program during his presidential campaign."²² These events suggest that the Socialist Party was trying to play down the importance of Communist support in an eventual government.

Thus, two years after the Program's signing, began a cycle of recrimination and defensive postures between the two parties that would last at least until the next presidential campaign began in earnest in 1980. It is surprising to an outside observer to discover how often the same terms appear in reference to either side in published interviews and articles; the Communists invariably describe the Socialists as "leaning to the right," while the PS retaliates by calling the PCF "stubborn and backward." Ironically, both parties had essentially the same reaction to the Common Program: it was a necessary means of ensuring the success of the working class and other popular forces,

²²Nugent, p.170.

yet they could not agree on the means of implementing its policies. I have reproduced some of the basic statements here in order to give the reader some background on the situation within the Left on the eve of the 1981 victory.

In 1977 when the time came for revision of the Common Program's goals, negotiations quickly came to a standstill. The main problem was the issue of nationalization.²³ Both parties agreed that turning ownership of formerly private companies over to the State could help to boost the economy; they disagreed over how extensive the nationalizations should be. The Communists wanted to include the subsidiaries of a corporation in addition to the parent company, while the Socialists took a more conservative view.

The breakdown of leftist unity came as a surprise to no one. The political obstacles that existed between the two parties had seemed insurmountable, especially in light of the PS' growing electoral power. Again, Communist resistance is related to the debate over revolutionary versus reformist ideology. The PCF felt that it had to present a strong opposition to the Socialist policy in order to effect structural reforms. When the PS began to launch an assault on the PCF's electoral base, the PCF decided that it was advantageous to leave the Union of the Left.

²³Nugent, p.172.

Nationalization was their pretext for leaving. The Socialists had promoted the nationalization of certain companies in order to provide more income for the state. While the Communists agreed with this policy, they wanted a widespread implementation, covering subsidiaries as well as parent companies. The Socialists refused to nationalize the subsidiaries, which gave the PCF an opportunity to leave the Union of the Left.

During the campaign for the European parliamentary elections in 1979, the Communists made it appear that European policy, and not nationalization, had been the pretext for the breakup of leftist union. In November of 1978 Georges Marchais stated in L'Humanité that the Socialist Party positions show

how the need to define a policy of real sovereignty for our country in conjunction with us was a determining factor in its decision to break off negotiations, destroy the left union and abandon the joint program. . . .It is certainly neither logical or credible [sic] for the PS or Mitterrand to claim loyalty to the joint program.²⁴

Rather than nationalization of private companies, European policy was now "a determining factor" in the breakup of Union of the Left. Since this quote is essentially a campaign statement, it should come as no surprise that the PCF would try to shift attention from one policy to another.

²⁴Foreign Broadcasting Information Service (FBIS), Western Europe, November 24, 1978, p.K3-K8.

The Communists were trying to appeal to those voters who reacted more to the emotional issue of Europe than they did about nationalization, or whose opinion on Europe tended to coincide with that of the Communists. One target might be the Gaullist Party, whose more extreme members wanted more stringent measures against Europe than Party Leader Jacques Chirac could offer.

The Socialists, the Communists insisted, had not only abandoned the Common Program; they had abandoned leftist union altogether. The Socialist Party, according to Georges Marchais,

was drawing up a plan for "fair administration" of the [current economic crisis] at the same time that the negotiations on updating the Joint Program were beginning in June [1977].²⁵

This statement reveals several aspects of Communist opinion. First, the PCF obviously felt that the Socialists did not have faith either in the policies of the Program or in the Communist Party as a partner in the Union, since they were creating a new document. Second, the Communists saw the PS' "fair administration" of the crisis as a shift to the right; the PS was not willing to revolutionize society but rather to manage the current one.

The Socialists responded in February by stating that they had achieved one of their goals on foreign policy in

²⁵FBIS, January 17, 1978, p.K1.

the Common Program by forcing the Communists to accept the idea of Europe. They further stated that "a supranational Europe will amount to nothing [as it is now]. . .it is necessary to transform the content of that Europe by letting the workers speak."²⁶ One wonders if the two parties were truly participating in a debate or simply airing their views, for they appeared to be in agreement most of the time. The struggle for electoral power may have been the real obstacle to leftist union. The case for this hypothesis becomes more solid when one considers the September, 1978, statement of François Mitterrand wherein he states that France "shall go to Europe with confidence to defend the interests of France. We want to construct an independent Europe."²⁷ This statement is remarkably similar to the viewpoint held by the Communist Party.

In the actual parliamentary elections the Left won far fewer votes than it had expected.²⁸ Many scholars say that quarrelling and bickering between the two groups led many voters to give their votes to a party that was perceived as able to win, or simply to abstain from voting. The Communists and Socialists did manage to come to an electoral agreement before the 1981 election, however, which is

²⁶FBIS, February 24, 1978, p.K3.

²⁷FBIS, September 7, 1978, p.K2.

²⁸Criddle, p.176.

fortunate; without the help of Communist votes, François Mitterrand might not have been elected.

While it may have drawn the Communist and Socialist Parties together, at least superficially, for a short period of time, we have seen in this chapter that the Common Program did have its shortcomings. Each party saw the document's European policy as a triumph over the other, even though the policy is made up of compromises. As the struggle for electoral victory became more intense, the two groups grew increasingly wary of each other. This animosity lasted until the coming to power of the Left in 1981, if not afterwards.

In the next chapter, in which I will look at specific cases in domestic policy as they affected policy on Europe, the Communists will play a minor role, since their party has become somewhat marginalized in the past ten years. However, their contribution to Socialist policy should not be ignored. The Common Program prepared the French electorate for a Socialist Party which, having adopted the Communist vocabulary of national sovereignty, came to power ready to protect French interests.

Chapter Four: The Mitterrand Presidency

The Socialist Party did not come to power in France on the strength of the Socialist electorate alone. The Communist Party lent its support to the leftist candidate François Mitterrand in exchange for posts in the new government, all of which were not involved in major policy-making. It is doubtful, therefore, that Mitterrand felt any pressure to bring his government's policy closer to the PCF's party line. He did, however, attempt to realize several of the Common Program's aspirations, notably in the areas of economic and of agricultural policy.

As has been noted elsewhere in this thesis,¹ a party in opposition often formulates its policy without regard for the realities of governing; this statement is true for the Socialists' European policy. The Mitterrand government's first term in office began with experimental policies which quickly gave way to more conservative programs better suited to the times. It can be argued that this turnabout occurred because of the European Economic Community's effect on government policy and because of the importance of EEC membership to France. The European Monetary System tends to standardize its members' economic policies; rather than follow their own program, the Socialists eventually changed

¹See Chapter 1 for the discussion of de Gaulle's apparent shift in attitude toward Europe, p.15.

their policy to conform with the other member countries. The importance of a favorable Common Agricultural Policy for French farmers allowed Mitterrand to distance himself from domestic difficulties while continuing to promote farmers' interests. Since currency rates and agricultural prices are interrelated, these two components of Europe are of major interest in this context and therefore make up the first two parts of this chapter. Mitterrand's change of heart was reflected after 1983 in his commitment to the building of a European identity through European Political Cooperation.

The European Monetary System

The European Monetary System plays an important role as a part of the European Economic Community's emphasis on eventual common prices throughout a common market. The fluctuation of currency values can make one country's products cheaper in relation to those of other countries, in the case of a devaluation of currency, or more expensive in the event of a revaluation. Since the currency rates are closely related to interest rates, the System functions as a method of bringing the members' economic policies in line with the lead currency, in this case the German Deutschmark. Great Britain refuses to participate in the EMS for this reason; the British appear to be more wary of

supranationality than the Gaullist-inspired French. In the case of France, the benefits of membership in Europe far outweighed the possible result of leaving the EMS. Mitterrand reluctantly decided to give up domestic economic policies in favor of Community cooperation.

The current European Monetary System was created in 1979, after an earlier system based on the American dollar failed. The currencies of all EEC member countries are linked to a composite currency, the European Currency Unit (ECU), which is a weighted average of the currencies. Each member's currency is allowed to diverge by no more than 2.5 per cent from its central parity rate against the ECU, except for the Italian lira, which has a 6 per cent limit in either direction. This rule implies that one currency cannot usually undergo a realignment by itself; all the member currencies are tied together.

The advantages of belonging to such a system are many. Exchange rates are predictable and the exchange risks affecting imports from and exports to partner countries are limited. Parity changes come less often than in a free system, making speculation less likely; even so, governments often deny that a realignment will take place in order to discourage speculation against their currency. All members share the impact of external and internal influences, such

as the "wild fluctuations"² of the American dollar in 1982 and 1983. Sharing the effects of outside influences also means that trade between member countries is not adversely affected.

When François Mitterrand took office in 1981, the world economy was on the verge of recession. Mitterrand's economic advisers, however, told the newly elected president that the economic outlook was good. Basing his policy on this advice, Mitterrand began to follow a program of expansion at a time when other countries were developing policies of deflation and austerity. The government's attempts at stimulating demand, in an effort to decrease unemployment, caused inflation rates to rise. Rising inflation generally means higher prices, which make exports more expensive in other countries. In order to maintain French competitiveness the franc had to undergo a devaluation, which would lower the cost of French exports.

The French government dismissed the first two devaluations of October 1981 and June 1982 as a "legacy from the previous 7-year term [of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing],"³ blaming them as well on the "delay in international

²Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS). Western Europe, June 18, 1982, p.K2.

³FBIS, June 18, 1982, p.K2.

recovery."⁴ The French government insisted that the inflation differential in 1981 between the franc and the mark was greater than the 8.5 per cent devaluation that took place. Economics minister Jacques Delors stated that the October devaluation had not been sufficient because the French had wanted to appear as "good Europeans,"⁵ unwilling to embarrass their partners. The delay in international recovery, on the other hand, was related to "prohibitive interest rates"⁶ in the United States.

The devaluations took place in an atmosphere of secrecy; Mitterrand insisted just days beforehand that a final decision had not yet been made. The French president also made references to the possibility of leaving the European Monetary System.⁷ Subsequent realignments would follow the same pattern. The two statements were designed to accomplish political goals. In the first case Mitterrand wanted to stay speculation against the franc in anticipation of a drop in the franc's value. By hinting at the prospect of leaving the EMS, the French government hoped to intimidate the other member countries into cooperating with French policy. Each change in exchange rates requires the

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷FBIS, June 1, 1982, p.K6-7; March 22, 1983, p.B1-B3.

permission of France's partners in the EMS. Richard N. Cooper writes that "each change was subject to intense negotiation over exactly which country should move relative to the ECU baseline and by how much."⁸

Cooper also notes that the French government asked for a smaller devaluation than it might have wanted because "having to seek German permission to change France's exchange rate was a serious embarrassment to Mitterrand and to French dignity and independence."⁹ A devaluation was seen as "politically damaging"¹⁰ and portentous of a "failure"¹¹ in domestic policy. Cooper implies that the French had to accept several devaluations, the combined effect of which was responsible for bringing French policy into line with that of the other member countries.

While comparing favorably with the previous year, the inflation rate for 1982 reached 14 per cent, far above the rates for other EMS member countries. West Germany's inflation rate, for example, was 5 per cent. In March 1983,

⁸Cooper, Richard N. "External Constraints on European Growth," in Lawrence, Robert Z. and Charles L. Schultze, eds, Barriers to European Growth: a Transatlantic View (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1987), p.573.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Cerny, Philip, in Williams, Stuart. Socialism in France: from Jaures to Mitterrand (London: Frances Pinter, 1983), p.29.

¹¹FBIS, June 18, 1982, p.K2.

therefore, the Mitterrand government faced the distasteful prospect of another devaluation of the franc.¹² In 1982 there had been rumors in France

that the president of the French Republic feels only limited support for a system which constantly exposes his government to parity adjustments whose effect on public opinion and on voters is very likely to be negative.¹³

The president's opinion undoubtedly affected his actions before the 1983 devaluation.

In March 1983 the French waited ten "costly"¹⁴ days before Mitterrand accepted the third devaluation. Franz-Olivier Giesbert, referring to the period as the "ten days that shook Mitterrand,"¹⁵ describes the events as a series of meetings in which Mitterrand heard opinions from all factions in his government. Giesbert claims that originally Mitterrand wanted France to carry out her threat of leaving the EMS, which would mean freedom of action to pursue the expansionist policy. This course of action would satisfy

¹²Criddle, Byron and D.S. Bell, The French Socialist Party, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p.160-161.

¹³FBIS, June 18, 1982, p.K2-3.

¹⁴Machin, Howard and Vincent Wright, eds. Economic Policy and Policy-making under the Mitterrand Presidency, 1981-84 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), p.16.

¹⁵Giesbert, Franz-Olivier. "Les Dix Jours Qui Ont Ebranlé Mitterrand," Le Nouvel Observateur, May 20, 1983, p.26.

the "volunteerists" who believe that "France can come out of it without trouble by closing in on herself."¹⁶

Eventually the members of Mitterrand's government who appreciated the economic advantages of belonging to the EMS persuaded Mitterrand that exit from the System was not possible. A floating franc would not have the necessary reserves behind it if it were attacked, they insisted.¹⁷ These "realists" believed that France should accept a "bloodletting of its buying power if it wants to reduce its balance of payments deficit."¹⁸ France could take advantage of the safeguard clauses of the Treaty of Rome to increase its import tariffs for three months, tariffs that would then be renewable every three months.

Against the volunteerists' notion of freedom of action, the realists set up a worst-case scenario. During the six months that the franc would float progressively downward on the currency market, it could lose 20 or even 30 per cent of its value. Import prices would go up by a similar amount, while the effect on exports would be felt six months later at the least.¹⁹

¹⁶Giesbert, p.27.

¹⁷Giesbert, p.26.

¹⁸Giesbert, p.27.

¹⁹Giesbert, p.28.

Putting new pressure on its partners, the French government called for a revaluation of the mark by at least 4 per cent, with a devaluation of the franc by as much. To obtain what it demanded, the French government threatened the installation of a new ultraprotectionist policy in the event that France would be forced to leave the EMS. At the time of negotiations the French most likely were not prepared to follow through with their threats, but the prospect of French departure was enough to force France's partners to comply. The mark was revalued by 5.5 per cent and the franc devalued by 2.5 per cent. The other member currencies also underwent adjustments in their exchange rates.²⁰

The intense debates that take place among member countries at the time of exchange rate adjustment revive efforts to extend the EMS' power in order to avoid such tensions. Negotiations have taken place on reform of the European Monetary system in favor of a true monetary union in which the European Commission and Council would decide European monetary policy. In 1985, however, these talks began to come to a standstill. Britain, which does not participate in the EMS, and West Germany were opposed to such proposals, although the Federal Republic claimed to be willing to consider a compromise. The other member

²⁰FBIS, March 22, 1983, p.B1-3.

countries were ready to cooperate. Shortly thereafter, however, the West German Bundesbank suspended intervention to support the EMS, and the other member countries' central banks followed suit, leaving exchange rates floating.²¹ This action took place shortly before the April 4, 1986 devaluation of the franc against the mark, for "domestic reasons,"²² by the Chirac government. Following the seventh revaluation of the Deutschmark since 1979, European Commission Chairman²³ Jacques Delors denounced the state of affairs:

We have just experienced the worst phase in the EMS' history: over the past fortnight it has lost all its attraction, to the extent that it was no longer apparent what distinguished it from a system of floating currencies.²⁴

The Community had essentially split into two halves. On one side the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium continued their role as the strong-currency countries, while the remaining member countries such as France, Denmark and Italy were "falling behind," a Le Monde editorial stated. "European building's lack of dynamism has

²¹FBIS, April 4, 1986, p.B2.

²²FBIS, April 4, 1986, p.K1.

²³Former Economic Minister.

²⁴FBIS, January 16, 1987, p.K2.

been demonstrated yet again, in the harshest possible way."²⁵

Having begun his term in office hoping to implement ambitious reforms in domestic policy, Mitterrand found himself constrained by European dictates. He soon recognized, however, that French national interests were best served by cooperating within the European Monetary System. When the other member countries hesitated to accept further reforms of European institutions, Mitterrand assumed the role of Euro-Gaullist, protecting European interests. The pattern would repeat itself in the case of agriculture.

Common Agricultural Policy

French membership in the European Economic Community hinges on agriculture, traditionally a sector with high political influence in France. In the early days of negotiations on European Union, the leaders of France's agricultural organizations made consultation of their opinion one of the conditions for support of the Treaty of Rome. They insisted on a Common Agricultural Policy, against the wishes of other national delegations,²⁶ and their demands were fulfilled. The Treaty of Rome contains

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Muth, Hanns Peter. French Agriculture and the Political Integration of Western Europe (Leyden, Holland: A.W. Sijthoff, 1970), p.91.

many French demands. These actions point to the mutual understanding between France and the other EEC member states concerning the importance of French involvement in the new undertaking; Europe gained French membership, and France received the means to enlarge her agricultural production, which in 1957 had not yet reached its full potential.²⁷

The Common Agricultural Policy has two main elements: price policy and structural policy. The goal of these two policies is to integrate the agriculture of all member states into one common market. The eventual result should be standardization of prices and structures. In the area of price policy, the Commission manipulates the output of produce to maintain specific internal prices. Negotiations between ministers of agriculture lead to a base price, which is usually higher than would normally be the case in a totally open market. A Community preference clause in the Treaty of Rome requires tariffs on outside (third-country) products and export taxes to third countries. Competition from outside products is thus kept to a minimum.²⁸ Joint financial responsibility among the member states also keeps cooperation necessary while encouraging the compromises that

²⁷For another example of agriculture in the EEC, see Chap. 1.

²⁸Some allowance is made for former colonies, much like most favored nation status. These countries have lower import tariffs.

lead to standardization. Originally the EEC was funded directly by member countries, but in 1971 it switched to a system of "own resources,"²⁹ under which it derived income from levies on imports from third countries, from a percentage of customs duties, and from a percentage of Value Added Tax income. Those countries who export from third countries thus help to finance the agriculture of comparatively under-developed members, such as Italy.

Structural policy calls for government intervention in farm size, levels of employment, amount and distribution of capital and the provision of advice, among other aspects.³⁰ Such action is designed to bring each nation's farm sector into a more productive role, with policy implementation taking place at the national government level so as to ensure the respect of regional differences. A government's interpretation of these areas and the appropriate policies to follow can vary widely.

In 1959 France was 98 per cent self-sufficient in agriculture; by 1981 the ratio had risen to 135 per cent.³¹ This increase reflects the importance relegated to

²⁹Swanney, Pamela J. "Common Agricultural Policy," in Juliet Lodge, ed. European Integration (Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 1983), p.92.

³⁰Swanney, p.91.

³¹Duchene, François, Edward Szczepanik, and Wilfrid Legg. New Limits on European Agriculture (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p.94.

agriculture under governments in the Fifth Republic.³² In the beginning of the Fifth Republic, the government created what Hanns Muth calls a "European Myth" that was prevalent in the early years of the EEC. According to the government, French agriculture would retain its family-farm orientation while production grew without "any excessively brutal overthrow of its structures."³³ Politicians promised greater sales at fair prices and full employment, while neglecting to mention the true nature of French agriculture, which was "deplorable. . . . [It] badly needed modernization and structural reforms."³⁴ Such reforms would require an overthrow of agricultural structures, which were protectionist in design. The Myth ultimately fell apart, arousing the anger and frustration of the French peasants. They became suspicious of government measures and were quick to demonstrate against unpopular actions.

Since 1962, when protectionism was finally dropped and "government promoted food as a whole [including manufacturing] in a positive, expansionist way, as one sector among the many others to which similar treatment is accorded."³⁵ The government also began to take action

³²It also shows an increasing dependency on export markets.

³³Maurice Faure, quoted in Muth, p.121.

³⁴Muth, p.122.

³⁵Duchene, p.96.

against the merging of small family farms into larger concerns. It encouraged young farmers to settle the countryside and attempted to give them the means to do so. It promoted collectivization, grouping together of several small farms, which prevented mergers while providing farmers with increased bargaining power. By cooperating with other peasants, farmers were better equipped to market their products.

When the Socialists came to power in 1981, they promoted reforms that they claimed would help the small farmer and reverse the "catastrophe" of the farmers' falling economic status. From 1973 to 1981 in France, small farmers' purchasing power dropped due to the oil crisis, by an average of 1.2 per cent a year. By comparison the average French citizen's purchasing power rose 0.4 per cent a year in the same period. Mitterrand's government therefore promised a system of *offices par produits*, under which farmers would be guaranteed "assured and relatively high prices for a quantum (fixed amount) of their produce."³⁶ The market would determine the remaining produce prices, within the limits of the EEC. Such a program, the Socialists insisted, would be acceptable to the EEC as an adjustment in national policy.

³⁶Keeler, p.66.

The Socialists also promised to take a stronger stance on CAP negotiations within the Community. Among the farmers' demands were protective and productive measures: a 15 per cent general price increase, "strict application" of the Treaty of Rome, and combat of influences from outside the Community, i.e. the United States.

The Socialists called as well for a system of *offices fonciers*, which would control speculation on land and help marginal farmers to enlarge their properties in order to make a living. The chief reform in this case involved a transfer of control from the regional to local level. Whereas formerly the members of land-use councils were chosen by the foremost farmers' union, the FNSEA, and other prominent organizations, Mitterrand's plan called for election of council members by local elections. Critics of the plan claimed that such elections would cause the councils to bow to local pressure and to distribute land in a "politicized and inefficient manner."³⁷ The Socialists saw merely a form of rural democracy.

The *état de grace* of the first six months of the Mitterrand presidency came to an abrupt end in agricultural policy, however, when Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy presented a compensation plan to cover the estimated 3.1 per cent fall in income that the agricultural sector had suffered in 1981.

³⁷Ibid.

which would permit him to understand the problems of the peasant world."⁴¹ The farmers participated in one last show of force in a demonstration at Paris on February 23 that drew between 60,000 and 100,000 demonstrators. The "hot winter" was over.

Three weeks after the demonstration in Paris, Mitterrand took a firm stance with his European partners, exactly as he had promised the farmers. During a Council of Ministers meeting on March 17, 1982 the president stated that

the farmer's interests will be defended with constancy and persistence. . . although France may be very attached to European construction it has no intention of sacrificing its agriculture to it.⁴²

Mitterrand was intent on allaying French peasants' fears that the Socialist government would ignore their interests.

The Socialists turned in April 1982 to a program of "realism over doctrine."⁴³ A rising inflation rate, pressure for a second devaluation of the franc, a growing budget deficit and trade deficit combined to force the government away from its ambitious program of reforms. Two months later, austerity measures replaced the ambitious program of expansion. The *office foncier* bill became "stuck

⁴¹Le Monde, Feb. 9, 1982.

⁴²FBIS, March 18, 1982, p.K1.

⁴³Keeler, p.79.

Compensation for farmers had been a yearly occurrence throughout the Fifth Republic after 1962, but the Socialists decided to reform this program as well. From "undifferentiated assistance" the Socialists moved to "selective assistance."³⁸ Aid would be given only to those most in need.

The FNSEA objected to several elements of the Mauroy proposal. Although the farming sector had lost 9 billion francs, the government proposed a compensation of 5.5 billion francs, approximately 60 percent of the total loss. Only slightly more than half of the money would come from the state; the rest would be withdrawn from the capital surpluses of the Cr dit Agricole, the farmers' cooperative bank. Finally, the FNSEA objected to the mode of distribution, which left one-third of farmers without direct income support assistance.

The main source of contention, apparently, was the role of the FNSEA in implementing these reforms. Once the dominant force in agricultural policies and the only recognized union, the FNSEA was now competing with several smaller organizations who had been recognized by the Socialist government shortly after 1981. In the 1950s the FNSEA had been able to obtain benefits for agriculture in exchange for political support. Under Mitterrand's first

³⁸Keeler, p.73.

government, the bureaucrats implemented policy and refused to meet with the *Fédération*.

The more the Socialist government objected to the FNSEA's desire to "interfere" in government affairs, the more prestige the FNSEA gained.³⁹ The compensation program was the last straw for the FNSEA, and the result was the so-called "hot winter" of 1981-1982. The first riot took place on December 11, 1981 as a mob of 3,000 angry farmers took part in a "bloody confrontation with riot police"⁴⁰ outside the regional prefecture in Strasbourg. On February 2 Agricultural Minister Edith Cresson, whom some had criticized as being too flashy and too hard-line, supposedly barely escaped with her life during a nationally televised riot. The chaotic state of affairs was humiliating for the government, which in its first year of office wanted to have good publicity. The rioting forced Mitterrand to back down on his reform program.

The French president met with FNSEA head François Guillaume a week after the "Cresson incident" in a *tete-a-tete*, which was apparently designed to restore Guillaume's feeling of importance within the administration. Guillaume apparently gained some solace from the meeting; afterward he told reporters that Mitterrand had a "rural sensibility

³⁹Keeler, p.75.

⁴⁰Ibid.

somewhere in government machinery,"⁴⁴ while the *offices par produits* bill in its revised form made no mention of the *quantum* or of a minimum guaranteed income. Instead the Socialists promised to work within the limits of Community regulations to provide subsidies.

After the "hot winter" debacle Mitterrand made fewer references to domestic agricultural policy in his press statements. As the enlargement of the then 10-member Community to a 12-member Community appeared more and more to be an eventual reality, Mitterrand spoke of "strengthening agricultural policy and protecting the South's products as [we] protect the North's products."⁴⁵ This statement is in part based on the firm stance that Mitterrand had promised to take in the EEC.

From 1983 onward the Socialists turned their attention toward the EEC in order to reform the Common Agricultural Policy, which the majority of member countries felt needed revising. Among the problems were surplus produce, including 10 million metric tons of wheat, 1 million metric tons of powdered milk, and 760,000 metric tons of butter; the issue of the British contribution; the entry of Portugal and Spain; and the abolition or limitation of the Monetary

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵FBIS, November 30, 1982, p.K1.

Community. This means that we have to take into account production in Europe and not only our own.⁴⁹

In other words, France's Community interests were as important, if not more so, than domestic issues. Mitterrand hoped to work within the Community to find favorable solutions for French farmers while allowing the new Agricultural Minister Michel Rocard⁵⁰ to take care of domestic policy.

The policy of following Community standards rather than domestic policy continued throughout the first term of Mitterrand's government, with small victories occurring along the way. At the June 1984 Fontainebleau summit the dispute between Great Britain and the other members over British contribution to the EEC budget was settled. The CAP reform projects were tackled with "political courage which at last. . . displays a capacity to adapt."⁵¹

Cohabitation did not alter France's commitment to the Common Agricultural Policy. In 1986 Foreign Relations Minister Jean-Bernard Raimond⁵² emphasized the benefits of participating in CAP while warning about stalls in reforms:

It is not only in France's interest but also in the Community's interest to continue to export

⁴⁹FBIS, April 9, 1984, p.K1.

⁵⁰Edith Cresson left the government in 1983.

⁵¹FBIS, March 5, 1985, p.K4.

⁵²Appointed by Prime Minister Jacques Chirac.

Compensatory Amounts (MCAs).⁴⁶ The MCAs were a subject of contention for the French; the Nouvel Observateur of April 29, 1983 explained the problem:

The MCAs should in principle serve as a regulator between the European currencies, to permit the correction of the effects of monetary fluctuations. When a country devalues its currency it has a favorable impact, in principle, in the exportation of industrial products. But not agricultural products. That is true because of the Agricultural Common Market, which is founded on the unity of prices.⁴⁷

The MCAs were originally planned to eliminate difficulties in speculation or in arbitrage, in which one country's devaluation of currency would lead to buying up of its products by brokers taking advantage of the lower price. This action would be detrimental to strong-currency countries, but favorable to the country that devalued its currency, such as France, which in 1982 had already undergone two devaluations.

During his presidency of the European Council,⁴⁸ François Mitterrand emphasized the importance of France's membership contribution in the European Community:

We belong to the Community, and the farmers, more than any other profession, want to remain in the

⁴⁶Baumier, Jean. "Le Casse-tete d'Athenes," Le Nouvel Observateur, December 2, 1983, p.35.

⁴⁷LeVaillant, Yvon. "Quand M. le P-D.G Manifest," Le Nouvel Observateur, April 29, 1983, p.25.

⁴⁸Each EEC member controls the Council's presidency for six months on a rotating basis.

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⁵⁰Edith Cresson left the government in 1983.

⁵¹FBIS, March 5, 1985, p.K4.

⁵²Appointed by Prime Minister Jacques Chirac.

agricultural and food products. There are many difficult problems to be solved, especially budget problems.⁵³

These budget problems came to a head at the June 1987 Copenhagen summit, at which Germany refused to give up the MCAs, which "help offset the negative effects of a strong Deutschmark."⁵⁴ The member countries including Great Britain urged Germany to give up the MCAs, which "induce farmers throughout the EEC to overproduce, as they [are] assured of getting a good price, regardless of demand,"⁵⁵ according to British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

That Mitterrand continued to participate in negotiations on Common Agricultural Policy despite lack of progress is a good indication of his commitment to Europe. Great Britain and West Germany played the role of obstacle to reform rather than France in the first term of the Mitterrand presidency. France had given up the "adjustment in national policy" to which she seemed so committed in 1981, in favor of increased promotion of Europe as the answer to agricultural problems.

⁵³FBIS, September 16, 1986, p.K3.

⁵⁴FBIS, June 30, 1987, p.CC1.

⁵⁵Ibid.

European Political Union

Faced with a breakdown in European cooperation, the Mitterrand government turned to the issue of European Political Cooperation (EPC) in an effort to get Europe moving again. Shortly after he assumed the European Council Chair, Mitterrand made a statement in which he said that intra-Europe disputes and political union were closely related:

We [of Europe] must first of all settle our disputes. Disputes cannot be settled without a political will. We need a political will to settle these conflicts.⁵⁶

Mitterrand meant that Europe needed to reestablish an identity, "an awareness of what it wants, of what it can do."⁵⁷ He thought that Europe had lost its identity and was rapidly deteriorating.

Mitterrand offered his services as the European most able to motivate Europe, although he admitted that his powers were limited:

I do what I have to do. I will do everything I can to save the Community; I will do everything I can. Nothing more. It depends on the other Nine as well.⁵⁸

⁵⁶FBIS, February 9, 1984, p.K1.

⁵⁷FBIS, January, 3, 1984, p.K1.

⁵⁸FBIS, February 13, 1984, p.K1.

Mitterrand recognized that it was not enough to make threats in a Community of ten that would soon be 12⁵⁹, and that he could not act unilaterally. Yet one must admit that Mitterrand had evidently set himself up as the one true European, who best knew what Europe needed.

Mitterrand's External Relations Minister Roland Dumas suggested that France's ambition and the ambitions of Europe were as one:

. . .the ambition which France has for itself is inseparable from the ambition it has for Europe--a necessary way of boosting our country's influence. . . . The president and government's desire is to build Europe and restore momentum and hope to the union of Europeans.⁶⁰

Mitterrand was looking out for the interests of his own country as well as for those of Europe.

The French president's enthusiasm for Europe was not based on rhetoric alone. Fifteen days before the *cantoniales* (local elections) in 1985 Mitterrand announced an "initiative that will surprise."⁶¹ Guessing at the surprise, a commentator said that "the greatest shock could only come from decisions implying true abandonment of sovereignty."⁶² At the end of 1985 an intergovernmental

⁵⁹Spain and Portugal entered in 1986.

⁶⁰FBIS, July 26, 1984, p.K1-K3.

⁶¹Schlosser, François. "Europe-L'Initiative Qui Surprendra," Le Nouvel Observateur, March 22, 1985, p.22.

⁶²Ibid.

conference took place, as the culmination of a process Mitterrand set in motion at the Fontainebleau Summit in June 1984. The result was the Single Europe Act, "the first major reform of the treaty that established the European Community, and a giant stride along Europe's road to full union."⁶³ The Single Europe Act was designed to bring the member countries closer together in political cooperation.

The Act contains four groundbreaking changes. On the subject of European Monetary Union, the text is unclear; apparently the member states could not agree on more concrete policy. Member states are urged to "cooperate in accordance with the objectives of Article 104 [of the Treaty of Rome],"⁶⁴ which calls for high employment and stable prices, "to ensure the convergence of economic and monetary policies."⁶⁵ Furthermore the partners are encouraged to "take account of the experience acquired. . . within the EMS and in developing the ECU." The Act understandably shies away from any mention of what a proper policy might be.

The European Parliament gains authority under the Single Europe Act. Where before the Treaty of Rome

⁶³Wistrich, Ernest. After 1992: the United States of Europe (New York: Routledge Press, 1989), p.129.

⁶⁴Treaties Establishing the European Communities (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Community, 1987), p.1031.

⁶⁵Ibid.

mentioned "consultation" of the Parliament, which does not imply acceptance of the EP's opinion, the Act replaces "cooperation."⁶⁶ The Commission presents a proposal to the EP, which then has three months to make amendments. In the past the Parliament members were able to register their opinions but their statements did not have much effect on Community policy.

Instead of unanimously taking decisions, the European Council members now required only a "qualified majority," except in carefully defined areas of importance.⁶⁷ The Luxembourg Compromise of 1966, which helped to bring the crisis of 1965 to a close,⁶⁸ stated that a country could refuse to agree to a proposal provided that the proposal conflicted with grave national interests. In the early 1980s some countries, notably Great Britain, reputedly took extreme advantage of the Compromise, which sparked a movement for reform within the Community. The overthrow of the Luxembourg Compromise was undoubtedly one of the Single Europe Act's greatest achievements.

The most promising development, however, concerned cooperation in foreign policy areas, considered the most

⁶⁶Treaties, pp.1022-1023.

⁶⁷Such as decisions concerning a third country's application for membership.

⁶⁸See Chapter 1.

important step toward a political union. One would expect to find a statement about a member country's foreign policy taking precedence over that decided by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs in joint sessions, but there is none. The Act defines relevant foreign policy areas as those of "general interest;" presumably, member states' relations with former colonies would continue on a national rather than Community level. The "High Contracting Parties" are admonished to maintain consistent policies, to avoid disagreements that might impede a quick consensus, and to act according to Community policy in all international settings.⁶⁹ Most importantly, the members agree to cooperate in the area of security.⁷⁰

Unfortunately, the Act does not specify whether Europe should eventually be a confederation or a federation. The debate surrounding the final configuration of European government had since the 1950s revolved around these two ideals. The difference between these two terms is hard to discern, although a federation seems to imply more surrender of national sovereignty and a stronger government. That the Single Europe Act does not discuss the future form of a united Europe indicates that the debate had not yet produced a consensus.

⁶⁹Except within the Western European Union and NATO.

⁷⁰Treaties, pp.1047-1050.

Mitterrand's efforts at boosting European confidence won him positive responses from the French public. In a poll by the French agency Sofres for the Nouvel Observateur in February 1986, 36 per cent of respondents said that in their opinion the Left and the Right were "equally committed to European Construction." As a reminder, the magazine recalled that in 1981 the largest percentage of respondents, 39 per cent, had named the Right as most pro-Europe.⁷¹ Mitterrand was rapidly acquiring a reputation as a political leader who was able to reconcile his country's national interests with the interests of France.

Despite the ambitious appearance of the Single European Act, it soon became clear that EPC would not exist overnight. In 1987, frustrated by the growing EEC budget, the three largest members--Great Britain, Germany and France--stalled on policy-making. An editor in Le Monde, a widely-read French newspaper, called France's reasoning "difficult to understand inasmuch as [France] needs Europe more than anyone else to safeguard its autonomy."⁷² The editor meant that France could not afford to isolate herself in the EEC, and indeed France's alliance with Germany ultimately saved Europe from chaos. In February of 1987 the

⁷¹Le Nouvel Observateur, February 21, 1986, pp.24-26.

⁷²FBIS, January 16, 1987, p.K2.; emphasis provided by the author.

French and German foreign ministers met and reported that the two countries were

determined to give a new impetus to European unification in all areas and particularly to achieve a rapprochement in agricultural relations.⁷³

Agriculture, the reader will recall, was one cause of discord between the two countries.

French politicians eventually recognized that Europe was an imperative necessity in order for progress to occur. Increasingly, in order to defend French interests, which he perceived as being linked to Europe, the French president had to work within the European Community institutions, strengthening them and thereby giving more legitimacy to policy. This situation is apparent in Mitterrand's economic policy. Faced with the prospect of a weakening franc, the president could either remove the franc from EEC control and allow it to float on the currency markets, or revise his domestic economic policy. To leave the European Monetary System and thereby assert total independence would have meant chaos; therefore, he halted the expansionist program in favor of austerity, thereby falling into line with the other member countries. Mitterrand chose to work within the European institutions as a means of escaping the farmers' domestic pressures while continuing to defend French

⁷³FBIS, February 9, 1987, p.K3.

agricultural interests. Mitterrand's attitude toward Political Union reveals his acknowledgement of the importance for French interests of cooperation in the EEC. When he promoted the Single European Act, Mitterrand was setting himself up as the leader of Europe. He understood that increasing France's influence in Europe would lead to European policies that reflected French needs.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The French Left has been divided on the issue of European Union since the debates on the European Defense Community, during which the Communists sided with the Gaullists against the issue, while the Socialists supported it. Each side made concessions to the other in the Common Program, as was explained in the second chapter, not only to create common policies but also to increase its own power. The Communists adopted moderate slogans, and the Socialists veered farther to the left, in an effort to reach a compromise and thereby to increase their electorate by attracting the other party's members. As long as either party was part of the opposition, foreign policy was abstract. The Leftist parties' members were only concerned with international matters insofar as they affected domestic policy, and therefore the parties concentrated on domestic issues.

When François Mitterrand was elected president of France in 1981, some analysts predicted trouble. They found it hard to believe that a Socialist president could adjust to the Gaullist constitution. Mitterrand has adapted very well. In 1982 at a press conference he said that France's foreign policy was one of

simple terms, both negative: neither alignment
with anybody, nor isolation. This means in

positive terms: independence and solidarity.
National independence.¹

His foreign trade minister Michel Jobert added:

Precisely because France is France, it could not merely watch. Its national instinct, as interpreted by its leader, led it to adopt courageous positions which in fact correspond to what some people call its vocation.²

Mitterrand's foreign policy appeared to have neo-Gaullist leanings. The area of foreign policy became important in the Socialist government because it represented continuity and stability rather than rupture, and therefore helped the French electorate to adjust to the alternance.

Byron Criddle, on the other hand, notes the "new Europeanism" of the Socialist Party, which had "long desired to 'get Europe moving again.'"³ Apparently Mitterrand had hoped to install similar measures to those in effect in France, with as an expected result "European-wide stimulation of growth through increased public demand."⁴ The French president called for Europe-wide economic policies in order to fight unemployment, a strategy that ran counter to the approach of the other EEC states.

¹FBIS, June 12, 1982, p.K1.

²FBIS, September 6, 1982, p.K2.

³Criddle, Byron, and D.S. Bell, The French Socialist Party, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p.170.

⁴Ibid.

Although Mitterrand never mentions the problem explicitly, he must have felt some conflict between the importance of maintaining French independence in foreign affairs and ascribing to a supranational Europe that he had for so long advocated. Stephen George sums up this dilemma perfectly:

Even presidents who have been known to be less nationalistic in their personal predispositions have had to retain elements of de Gaulle's nationalist attitudes in their approaches to the Economic Community. . . . Nationalism gives French politics its flavor; because of it French policy on the EC is marked by ambiguity.⁵

As we have seen in the first chapter, de Gaulle had never been strongly against the idea of a united Europe. Even when he vetoed British entry into the Community, or when he brought about the agricultural policy crisis of 1965, he thought that to do otherwise would be to jeopardize Europe's unity. He believed in working within Europe to gain benefits for France. His methods may at times have seemed harsh, but he knew that leaving Europe would be a mistake for the French economy. De Gaulle was also in a better position to demand accommodation of French interests; as Europe grew from six to twelve members, the possibility diminished of reaching an agreement that would be totally acceptable to France.

⁵George, Stephen. Politics and Policy in the European Economic Community (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p.29.

Mitterrand therefore had to reconcile his ambitious reform program in economic policy, which fought against capitalism, with a free market-inspired EEC that provided France with more than half of her export income. Eventually, as we have seen, he was forced to abandon his independent policies and to bring his program more in line with the other member countries. Mitterrand's agricultural policy, while conforming with EEC regulations, met with violent criticism from the farmers' union. In the aftermath of the farmers' demonstrations, Europe served as a refuge for Mitterrand within which he could serve French interests while removing himself from the tense domestic situation. Recognizing that stronger European institutions would be able to enforce pro-France policies, Mitterrand concentrated his efforts in the last four years of his first term on strengthening Europe.

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