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France: The Decline of the Communist Party



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An Intelligence Assessment

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*EUR 84-10220
November 1984*

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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [redacted] Office
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**France: The Decline of the
Communist Party**

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Key Judgments*Information available
as of 29 October 1984
was used in this report.*

The once-powerful French Communist Party (PCF) has suffered grave setbacks in recent years. Contrary to the expectations of PCF leaders, Communist participation until this summer in the Socialist-led government of President Mitterrand contributed to the party's continued electoral decline and to the demoralization of Communist militants.

The limits of PCF influence on Mitterrand's policies—particularly in the economic domain—probably account for much of the disaffection permeating the Communist rank and file. The policy zigzags of party leader Marchais, the resistance of top PCF officials to internal demands for reform, the party's generally staunch support for the Soviet Union, and the declining attraction of Marxism among French intellectuals also have contributed to the party's malaise.

The Communists' increasingly strident criticism of Socialist policies heightens the risk of labor unrest this fall and winter, but we strongly doubt Mitterrand will yield to Communist demands to resume expansionary economic policies and to alter significantly his industrial restructuring program. Although a Communist strategy of attacking Mitterrand from the left might enable the PCF to regain a portion of its pre-1981 strength in the legislative elections scheduled for 1986, we believe that at least for the near term the PCF will continue what many French political observers—including some Communists—have characterized as a "historic decline."

The PCF's weakness contributes significantly to the decline of the left as a whole and probably enhances prospects for a return to conservative government in Paris. From recent election results it appears that even a united left currently could poll only one-third of the vote. The PCF's weakness, on the other hand, does give Mitterrand maneuvering room in his continuing attempts to broaden his appeal among centrist voters.

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Increased Communist sniping almost certainly will not significantly affect French foreign policy, especially Mitterrand's support for the Alliance and his firm stand on East-West security issues. On the contrary, we believe the PCF's diminishing influence on French politics and society as a whole will further isolate the only major party that does not fundamentally support democratic principles or maintenance of a substantial contribution to Western collective defense. This reduced influence will not necessarily lead to marked improvement in French-US relations; the Mitterrand government's perception of French national interests will continue to set France on a collision course with the United States from time to time, especially on economic issues. Nevertheless, the PCF's diminished voice on the left almost certainly will ensure a more pragmatic consideration by the French Government of US policies across the board.



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France: The Decline of the Communist Party [Redacted]

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Introduction

During its 64-year history, the French Communist Party (PCF) has participated only twice—and for brief periods—in national governments. Nonetheless, the party’s strong base in the working class, its attraction for prominent intellectuals and artists, and its close ties to the Soviet Union have enabled it to exercise significant indirect influence on a broad spectrum of French administrations. [Redacted]

The Communists’ domination of the left made them a force to be reckoned with and feared. The party’s strength in the electorate, unions, and municipal governments gave it at least an indirect influence on important aspects of both domestic and foreign policy. Many knowledgeable observers have suggested, for example, that efforts by de Gaulle, Pompidou, and Giscard to improve relations with the Soviets were at least in part motivated by their hope that Moscow would help keep the PCF in check domestically. [Redacted]

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In recent years the PCF has suffered major electoral setbacks and a drop in party morale that have called into question its ability to reclaim its once undisputed leadership of the French left. Indeed, even Communist officials recently have publicly raised the specter of their party’s “historic decline” and eventual “marginalization.” [Redacted]

The PCF was not immune to serious setbacks during the Gaullist era, as evidenced by defections of party loyalists following Soviet repression in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Still, it was not until Georges Marchais became the PCF’s General Secretary in 1972 that the party’s resilience began to come gradually into question. Outflanked internationally by the Gaullists’ “special relationship” with the Soviets, Marchais also was challenged domestically by Francois Mitterrand’s dogged efforts to rebuild the Socialist Party. [Redacted]

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A Turbulent History

Since its founding in 1920 the PCF has played an important role in French political life. The party grew slowly initially, but by the mid-1930s it was the undisputed voice of the radical left and of much of the working class. Partly in recognition of its major role in the Resistance and partly in hopes of maintaining labor peace, General de Gaulle appointed several Communists to important posts in his Cabinet in 1945-46. After breaking with Prime Minister Ramadier’s economic policies, the Communist ministers were dismissed in 1947. [Redacted]

Marchais’ response was to zigzag between gestures of moderation—such as playing down revolutionary and pro-Soviet rhetoric and signing the “Common Program” with the Socialists—and a hardline approach exemplified by his scuttling of the leftist voting alliance in 1977 and vocal defense of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in early 1980. Following the PCF’s disastrous showing in the presidential and legislative elections in 1981, Marchais reversed course again and accepted Mitterrand’s offer of a junior role in the Cabinet. (See the appendix for biographical sketches of key PCF officials.) [Redacted]

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During the postwar period, PCF leaders used their strength in labor to expand the party organization at the local level, to win municipal elections in important cities, and to promote the Communist-dominated General Confederation of Labor (CGT) into France’s largest and most powerful trade union. Having consolidated effective control over union labor in the 1950s and having entrenched itself as the perennial voice of antiestablishment discontent, the PCF rose to command about 25 percent of the vote in the 1960s. [Redacted]

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**Evolution of Public Opinion
Regarding the Communist Party
and Georges Marchais ^a**

Percent

	Opinion Regarding Communist Party			Desire To See Marchais Play Important Role in French Politics
	Positive	Negative	No Opinion	
1973	33	48	19	
1974	37	47	16	31
1975	30	54	16	24
1976	31	50	19	26
1977	30	55	15	28
1978	29	58	13	26
1979	28	58	14	25
1980	23	63	14	20
1981	25	62	13	23
1982	24	64	12	18
1983	21	66	13	16
1984	18	70	12	15

^a Data for 1973-83 are from *SOFRES, Opinion Publique, Enquetes et Commentaires, 1984* (Paris, 1984). The 1984 figure is an average of monthly surveys through June.

According to a wide variety of press sources and party insiders, the Communists hoped to gain a number of important advantages from their participation in the leftist coalition. PCF leaders—especially Marchais—reportedly argued that participation would:

- Increase the Communists' prestige by demonstrating their ability to govern.
- Enable the PCF to bolster the CGT's influence within the government and state-run industries, increasing the CGT's appeal to workers.
- Allow the Communists to help shape electoral reforms—such as proportional representation—to recover the PCF's pre-1981 voting strength.
- Open doors for Communist infiltration of the government bureaucracy.

Recent Symptoms of Decline

Contrary to the expectations of the Communist leadership in 1981, we believe several key indicators demonstrate that the PCF has fallen steadily toward a much-diminished and perhaps marginal role in French political life.

Waning Public Support. The party's decline has been most apparent in dismal voter turnout, especially in local elections in which the PCF used to do well. In 1977 the Communists controlled 72 of France's 232 largest cities, but in nationwide municipal elections last year their share dropped to 56. The Communists have since lost an additional 13 city halls in court-ordered elections resulting from PCF vote fraud. Reduced control over large cities is particularly damaging for the PCF since it entails:

- Loss of patronage jobs for Communist functionaries, who customarily hand over their salaries to the party in return for "proletarian wages."
- Loss of kickbacks and lucrative contracts for party-affiliated and party-owned businesses.
- Loss of public subsidies to a wide range of PCF organizations such as sports associations and radio stations.
- Loss of the prestige that comes with governing.

Other recent election results suggest that the PCF's decline has accelerated nationwide, notably in former Communist strongholds. The PCF polled 11.2 percent of the vote in the European Parliament election in June—its worst showing since 1932. Party candidates scored over 20 percent in only five of France's 97 departments, and three of these high scores were in thinly populated regions of traditional PCF support. The party's share of the vote dropped significantly in its long-established bastions in the industrialized north, in the "Red Belt" around Paris, and in the Marseilles region. According to the US Embassy, results of recent municipal and European Parliament elections demonstrate that Communist strength in Paris has become negligible.

Opinion polls by respected private institutes confirm the downward trend in PCF prestige, particularly among Communist backers. In 1979, 11 percent of a national survey considered the PCF the "most capable" of all parties in managing the economy effectively; only 5 percent felt the same in 1983. In response to a question likely to indicate opinion of the Communists, the 1979 survey found that 16 percent of the

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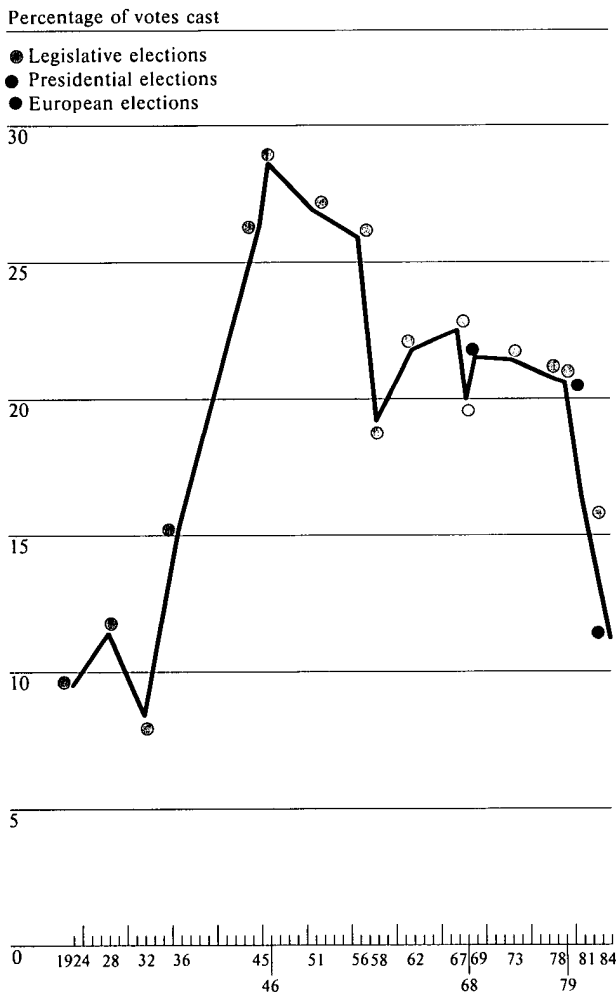
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Figure 1
Evolution of the Communist Vote,
1924-84



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sample believed the PCF was the party "most capable of defending the interests of folks like you," whereas in 1983 only 9 percent believed this. Another respected poll indicated recently that 15 percent of Communists believe the party and its leaders consistently "defend outmoded ideas."

Comparison of PCF and FN Approval Ratings

Comparisons of PCF party and leadership approval ratings with those of the extreme-right National Front (FN)—a party that unabashedly mobilizes racist feelings for its anti-immigrant program—indicate that most Frenchmen see the two parties as equally objectionable. Figaro magazine's *SOFRES* survey last spring asked a national sample which leaders they "would wish to see play an important role in the months and years to come." Of the group, 16 percent approved FN leader Jean-Marie Le Pen and 15 percent backed Marchais. The same survey showed that whereas 52 percent "would not vote" for the FN "in any case" 58 percent would not accept the PCF. In the most recent survey, the Communists' rejection rate had risen 12 percentage points, and that of the FN, 8, over the 1979 results.

Disillusioned Membership. Widespread reports indicate that PCF leaders are very concerned about declining membership, flagging cell activity, stagnating organizational initiatives, and an air of pessimism and disillusionment that they sense has settled over the party. Membership probably has fallen considerably since the leftist victory in 1981.¹ Party leaders recently have reorganized many of the cells to disguise decreasing membership.

We believe the membership drop reflects serious disillusionment among Communist militants who have complained about the party leadership's confused policies, the recent series of Communist electoral defeats, and the PCF's failure to influence government policies significantly—particularly on economic

¹ Precise figures on membership are closely guarded by the PCF leadership. Self-serving party claims of increasing membership, inflated figures of over 700,000 militants, and tactics to obscure thinning ranks—such as issuing membership cards for multiple years—have failed to prevent widely publicized accounts of the party's difficult straits. Well-informed journalists and political observers estimate that membership probably is 200,000 to 250,000. This would represent a drop of about 300,000 members in the last five years.

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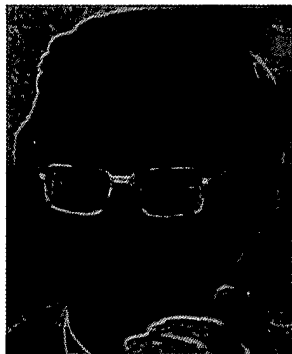


Figure 2. Guy Hermier, editor of *Revolution*. [redacted]

issues. Party leaders appear well aware of these reasons. [redacted]

[redacted] a large majority of militants had abstained in the European Parliament election because of dissatisfaction with the party's line and its bleak prospects. [redacted]

[redacted] many party functionaries also are disgruntled and blame the leadership's decision to participate in the government for the PCF's recent electoral defeats. In an unusual public airing of views within the PCF's upper echelons, Central Committee member and *Revolution* editor Guy Hermier recently summed up the party's lack of direction: "Today we know well what we no longer are, what we no longer want to be. But we are at pains to outline clearly . . . what we are and what we want for French society." [redacted]

The Communist-controlled CGT also has fallen on hard times. The CGT's serious losses to rival independent and pro-Socialist unions in social security elections in 1983, its inability to exploit Communist ministerial entree to prevent the determined Socialist government from cutting jobs in restructured industries, and its generally lackluster performance in organizing labor protests have cast into bold relief the diminished strength of the once-feared union.² According to various press and US Embassy reports,

² Exact membership figures for the CGT are closely held. Some measure of its eroding membership can be found, however, in its declining vote in annual elections for labor conciliation boards. In 1966 it received slightly over 50 percent of worker votes; by 1983 its share had fallen to about 30 percent. The union's newspaper claimed membership of 2.0 million in 1976 and 1.6 million in 1980. Since then it has made no new claims. Membership now has probably fallen to well under 1 million. Claude Marmel, who has written extensively on the CGT, suggests that the leadership can mobilize only about 120,000 militants, "almost all of whom are members of the PCF." [redacted]

these indications of continued decline have angered CGT leaders, who argue that PCF participation in the government has, on balance, tied the CGT's hands. [redacted]

Declining Media Influence. Communist media are also in serious trouble—which is partly a symptom and partly a cause of the PCF's other difficulties. [redacted]

[redacted] in late 1983 a party report bemoaned the declining number and financial health of PCF radio stations, resulting partly from the loss of subsidies from municipal governments that the party no longer controls. Sales of party newspapers also have fallen since the leftist coalition was formed. *Revolution*, the Central Committee's own organ, may be forced to close because of financial difficulties, and already hard-pressed party journalists had to wait months recently for what turned out to be meager salary raises. [redacted] financial problems also have forced the party's principal daily, *L'Humanite*, to close most of its foreign bureaus. [redacted]

While its own media have entered a period of retrenchment, the PCF appears to have failed to gain much influence over the non-Communist French media—one of the party's goals in joining the leftist coalition. PCF National Assembly members tried to apply pressure on the government in 1981—without apparent success—to clamp down on the television networks, complaining that the greater freedom enjoyed by journalists under the Socialists had enabled "rightist media" to attack the government, the Socialists, and the PCF. Communist minister Charles Fiterman reportedly urged Mitterrand in 1982 to appoint Communists to prominent media jobs and complained that the PCF was not receiving enough television time. [redacted] party journalists placed in the national radio-television networks have been "neutralized" by their superiors. Similarly, a PCF journalist has told US Embassy officials that the Socialists have been careful to restrict Communist access to midlevel positions of media direction. [redacted]

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Decline of the PCF Press

In 1952 the PCF had 16 daily newspapers, three of them national and 13 regional. Today, only four remain and only one, *L'Humanite*, is distributed nationally. Although some dailies almost certainly disappeared because of PCF media consolidation or were replaced by Communist radio, others vanished because of declining readership. [redacted]

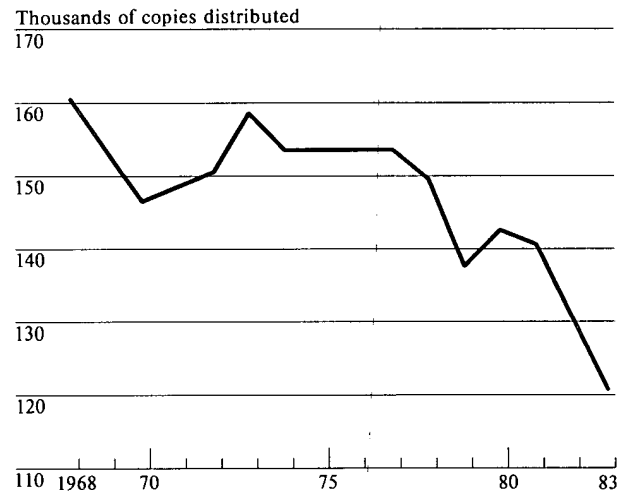
The PCF also published 82 weeklies in 1952. Although it is unclear how many it now controls, there are probably far fewer. Only seven, including *Revolution*, have a national following. [redacted]

Causes of Decline

Although Mitterrand has in many cases skillfully outmaneuvered the Communists, most of the causes of the party's decline, in our view, stem from its dogged pursuit of anachronistic policies, its penchant for abrupt and confusing changes in tactics, and its apparent inability to accommodate critics and mediate internal demands for reform. [redacted]

"Fossilized" Leadership. PCF leaders, we believe, continue to meet demands for change with isolation tactics and expulsions. The Central Committee has used the principle of "democratic centralism"—a Leninist concept calling for the party to speak with a single voice through its leadership—to prevent or crush internal dissent. Marchais and the older—"fossilized," according to critics—generation of party leaders such as *L'Humanite* boss Roland Leroy and party organization director Gaston Plissonnier have allowed no questioning of this principle. For example, party leaders recently have moved to silence internal dissent in the wake of the PCF's electoral defeat and departure from the government. According to the US Embassy in Paris, former Vocational Training Minister Marcel Rigout and the like-minded Civil Service Minister Anicet Le Pors have virtually disappeared from public view. Other reformists—such as party spokesman Pierre Juquin—are increasingly isolated within the party hierarchy. Daniel Karlin—a Communist intellectual, television commentator, and party representative on a state media board—attempted to publish a letter in *L'Humanite* calling for a full-scale

Figure 3
***L'Humanite* Sales, 1968-83**



Source: *Le Monde*, 9 August 1984 (citing official figures from the Office de Justification de la Diffusion).

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debate on the party's policies and future. Its publication was refused, as Leroy explained, "by order of the party, that is to say by Georges Marchais." [redacted]

Confused Policies. Under Marchais, the leadership also has failed to hold the PCF to a consistent policy. Indeed, it has relied on party discipline to sanction abrupt policy shifts that have left even the most dedicated militants bewildered. [redacted]

Changes in attitude toward the Socialists and the goal of leftist unity have probably created the most confusion. After signing the "Common Program" in 1972—when the PCF was still the dominant party on the left—Marchais became progressively more alarmed at rapid Socialist gains. Shifting his fire from the right to his Socialist "allies," Marchais effectively torpedoed the leftist alliance in 1977—a move that we

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Figure 4. Roland Leroy, director of L'Humanite. [redacted]



Figure 5. Gaston Plissonnier, PCF organizational director. [redacted]

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believe led to the left's defeat in the legislative election in 1978. During the presidential campaign of 1981, Marchais leveled his most bitter attacks against Mitterrand and reportedly attempted to engineer Giscard's victory in the second round of voting. Only after the Socialist landslide in the parliamentary elections of June 1981 did Marchais reverse course and once again espouse the strategy of leftist unity.

[redacted]

dissidents within the party recently have charged, moreover, that the PCF's failure to cooperate with the Socialists wrecked the coalition and undermined possible Communist gains from participation. Former Minister Rigout has gone as far as to charge publicly that Marchais is personally to blame, stating that "the responsibility [for such failure] is collective but, for a part of the [Communist] electorate, Georges Marchais has become a man of failure."

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Mitterrand, in order to forestall PCF criticisms and to buy labor peace, invited the Communists to join his government; Marchais accepted, although halfheartedly. During the three years of Communist participation in the Mitterrand government, party leaders maintained that, despite disagreements with specific policies, the PCF was in the coalition to stay and that participation boosted the party's "legitimacy." These arguments won wide approval among the rank and file. Although its disagreements with the Socialists at first seemed manageable, the party ultimately adopted a more hostile and irreconcilable attitude toward Mitterrand's policies, particularly his austerity program. This confusing policy of "participation without support" was then followed, after the party abandoned the coalition last July, by a policy of "selective support," leaving many Communists to wonder how the party's new role differs from its previous position in the government.³

[redacted]

Little Policy Influence. In our judgment, another reason for the PCF's recent decline is its inability to show that its participation in the government resulted in significant influence on Mitterrand's key domestic policies.⁴ The increasing shrillness of PCF criticisms of the Mitterrand administration and the apparently cool reaction of the new Socialist Prime Minister Laurent Fabius to Communist demands for economic expansion and jobs programs have only underscored the PCF's impotence in this regard.

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According to polls conducted shortly before the coalition's breakup, more than 70 percent of militants favored participation and said they would be displeased by a leadership decision to withdraw. Some

In our view the PCF, largely excluded from cabinet discussions of foreign policy, also had very little influence on Mitterrand's foreign policy. Government officials simply ignored the PCF's strictures on East-West relations and on security issues—for example, its suggestion that French nuclear forces be counted in US-Soviet arms control talks. Its criticisms of French involvement in Chad and Lebanon, meanwhile, were openly condemned by Socialist Party officials as being blind to French national interests and disloyal to the leftist coalition.

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[redacted]

³ The clearest example of the PCF's confusing attitude toward the government came last spring. After lambasting the government's policies in the National Assembly and press, it voted confidence in the government.

[redacted]

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Figure 6. "The Blind Leading the Blind." Georges Marchais leads fellow politbureau members through a barrage of ballot boxes, complaining letters, and assorted fruit. "Hey! It seems to be raining!!" says one, while a colleague replies, "Hush."

In one respect, however, the PCF probably has had some success in achieving its goal. The appointment of Communist ministers opened the way for more PCF members to enter the government and the administrations of some state-run enterprises. According to a variety of US Embassy and press reports, the Communist ministers staffed their cabinets with faithful party functionaries and probably encouraged the hiring of party members in their civil service bureaucracies. New hiring regulations prohibiting disclosures of party affiliation as a condition of public employment undoubtedly aided this process and probably will make it difficult to identify PCF civil servants in the future. According to a press report last year, the party was especially active and successful in placing militants in the state-owned National Railroad System, then under the control of PCF Transport Minister Fiterman.

Although some of these gains probably will survive the coalition's breakup, perpetuating at least indirect Communist influence in the public administration, we expect the new Socialist ministers to move quickly to replace or sidetrack many known or suspected Communists. Moreover, reduced Communist access to government positions may demoralize some younger militants who had hoped that their party loyalty would be rewarded with more prestigious employment.



Figure 7. Georges Marchais, flanked by Charles Fiterman, announces the rupture in the leftist coalition, 19 July 1984

Support for the Soviet Union. Widespread reports suggest the PCF also has suffered from close identification with Soviet foreign policies and objectives in an era when the French public is increasingly critical of Moscow's actions. The PCF, for example, has maintained that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is merely assistance to a friendly and threatened neighbor and that the "excesses" of the Solidarity trade union movement in Poland justified the imposition of martial law. When Soviet behavior has been indefensible even for the PCF—the downing of the South Korean airliner in 1983 is one example—Communist spokesmen have shrugged off criticism of Moscow with the argument that "on the whole" the USSR is a force for good in the world.

The PCF leadership's often unabashed support of Soviet foreign policy has bred disaffection within the party's ranks. According to various press reports, even some party militants objected to Marchais' public support for Soviet actions in Afghanistan in a broadcast from Moscow in 1979. Some Communist officials, moreover, have openly suggested that the pro-Soviet party line has alienated many of the party's faithful, and especially its youth. For example, in a recent interview, Rigout charged that "for the young, the party often comes down to the equation P.C. [PCF] = USSR = gulag."

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Figure 8. Marcel Rigout, former PCF Minister of Vocational Training. [redacted]

Decline of Marxist Appeal. Although it is difficult to document, we believe structural changes in society are affecting profoundly those parts of the population traditionally influenced by the PCF. According to a variety of studies by French political scientists and sociologists, industrial restructuring and the advent of a high-technology and service economy are reducing the size of the old industrial proletariat on which the PCF and CGT depended. Similar studies also show that French workers, especially the young, are more literate, sophisticated, and independent minded than the older generation. PCF leaders publicly dismiss such findings as "bourgeois sociology" and insist that the party has not lost its proletarian moorings. Nonetheless, a survey of PCF members by a reputable conservative magazine shows that PCF membership is shifting from blue-collar toward service and white-collar employees and is suffering numerically in the process. [redacted]

Meanwhile, the PCF and Marxism apparently no longer have their traditional appeal to rebellious youth and idealistic intellectuals.⁵ The Communist youth organization is shrinking in size and enthusiasm, and, since the death of the Communist poet Louis Aragon last year, no distinguished intellectuals

⁵ French intellectual life has spawned a number of attractive, critical alternatives to Marxism—especially in philosophy, anthropology, and the new social sciences—where structuralists and the *Annales* school have emphasized testing authorities and questioning comprehensive theories. Marxist intellectual formulations—in particular assumptions about the historical development of social structure and the nature of social change—are now more often used as targets of criticism by social scientists, even by those who identify themselves as "in the Marxist tradition." [redacted]

remain in the party. According to Embassy and press reports, both intellectuals and young people have been particularly alienated by PCF support for Soviet and Eastern Bloc repressions. Some intellectuals who might formerly have joined the PCF now maintain a discreet distance from all party affiliation. Many others have apparently found political moorings among the parties of the center and center-right, creating what some observers have described as an intellectual renaissance on the right. [redacted]

Slim Prospects

Having withdrawn from the coalition, the PCF now must define a new strategy to regain its stature. Given the major fissures in the party and the serious difficulties of attracting new members, especially youth, we believe the party's near-term prospects are bleak. [redacted]

Search for a Strategy. After its break with the Socialists in mid-July, the Communist leadership announced a cautious policy of continued selective support for government proposals and refused to discount the possibility of returning to the government. Nevertheless, various party and CGT officials have gradually stepped up criticism of Socialist policies, and Communist deputies for the first time since leaving the government abstained in a parliamentary vote of confidence. This measured pace in moving toward opposition appears designed to win back hardliners who left the party because of its cooperation with the Socialists, without at the same time confusing, demoralizing, or alienating further the majority of party members who favored continued participation in the coalition. [redacted]

We believe that proponents of increasingly open attacks on government policies will gain the upper hand in PCF leadership circles. [redacted]

[redacted] party hardliners argue that the rank and file needs more clarity and simplicity in party policy explanations—an implicit rejection of the "selective support" approach. CGT officials, meanwhile, reportedly are eager for a "fall offensive" against the

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Figure 9. Anicet Le Pors, former PCF Secretary of State to the Prime Minister for Civil Service and Administrative Reform. [redacted]



Figure 10. Andre Lajoinie, president of the Communist group in the National Assembly. [redacted]

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government's economic program and may even replace CGT head Henri Krasucki in the hope of attracting new militants. Moreover, if the economy—and especially the unemployment situation—worsens or improves only slowly, US Embassy sources report that party leaders are counting on their opposition to Mitterrand to draw leftwing support away from the Socialists and permit the PCF to show a credible improvement in the 1986 balloting. [redacted]

Factionalism. In our view, this “back to the ghetto” strategy will further split the party between “reformers” and “conservatives.” Although serious internal bickering is not new for the PCF, [redacted]

[redacted] in recent years it has reached unprecedented levels. The “reformist” faction—which represents perhaps one-fourth of the Central Committee and is usually identified with Marcel Rigout, Anicet Le Pors, and Guy Hermier—has openly questioned Marchais' fitness, called for more open debate on party strategy, and applauded the achievements of the more independent-minded Italian Communist Party. On the other side, the “conservative” faction—closely identified with Roland Leroy and Gaston Plissonnier—has consistently disparaged cooperation with the Socialists (except on PCF terms), demanded the maintenance of party discipline through “democratic centralism,” and stressed the importance of close relations with Moscow. [redacted]

We expect these internal tensions to mount as the February party congress approaches. [redacted]

[redacted] Marchais hopes to remain

Secretary General, but many influential “conservatives” evidently regard him as mediocre and ineffective. Marchais may fear that hardliners will try to replace him, but [redacted] his change of heart on participating in the government has mollified them for now. [redacted]

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Many “reformers,” on the other hand, reportedly view Fiterman as the most capable and intelligent alternative to Marchais. Fiterman almost certainly would like to succeed Marchais but realizes that he must proceed carefully, especially because influential “conservatives” fear that he would shake up the PCF apparatus too much and prove to be uncontrollable. [redacted]

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In our view, Fiterman would not solve the PCF's problems. Although party “reformers” might gain greater influence, we see little prospect that they could effectively displace the “conservatives” now holding sway in both the Central Committee and Politburo. This results in part from the influence of a younger generation of conservative-minded *apparatchiks*—including party economist Philippe Herzog and PCF National Assembly leader Andre Lajoinie—who essentially share their elder patrons' views on “democratic centralism” and the dangers of “Eurocommunism.” Moreover, although Fiterman probably favors sweeping changes in the party apparatus, we do not believe that he actually supports the kinds of changes—open debate and greater distance from Moscow—reformers seek. [redacted]

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Membership Problems. PCF leaders also face the serious problem of mobilizing the party's remaining strength among workers. Although CGT leaders chafed under the restraints imposed by PCF participation in the leftist coalition, US Embassy and press reports indicate that union bosses may be overestimating the militancy of their members. As evidenced by the relatively low turnout and enthusiasm of CGT-led workers in the "March on Paris" last spring to protest the government's steel restructuring plan, the union rank and file apparently remain reluctant to join in all-out opposition to a leftist government, especially when such tactics play directly into the hands of the right. Although the PCF almost certainly would try to capitalize on spontaneous labor disturbances—most likely to erupt if the economy worsens considerably—the party would probably be unable to foment widespread disruptions on its own. [redacted]

The party faces similar problems in recruiting and mobilizing youth and intellectuals. It devoted scarce resources to funding the peace movement, for example, but failed to attract youth. Similarly, according to US diplomats in Paris, the much-ballyhooed Communist Youth Movement demonstration last spring against US policy in Nicaragua drew fewer than 100 protestors and fizzled after a half hour of unenthusiastic chanting. [redacted]

Many French political commentators, including Communists, seem pessimistic about the party's ability to recover. One disgruntled Communist journalist has predicted in the press that "with the disappearance of the old generation of party faithful and the arrival of a new generation who vote for anything but the Communists, [the PCF] will fall to 8 percent [of the vote] in five years and to 4 or 5 percent within 10 years." Rigout has noted publicly that the party captured only 6 percent of the youth vote in the recent Euroelections. A recent survey, moreover, noted that both the Communist leadership and older supporters are out of step with youthful opinions on a wide variety of key issues, such as the government's industrial policy and the effectiveness of the CGT. [redacted]

Implications

Electoral Arithmetic. The Communist Party's decline and its growing opposition to the Socialist government will have a notable effect on the political scene. The

PCF's slide, for example, has contributed substantially to the erosion of the entire left. Although some evidence suggests that disgruntled Communist voters have switched to the Socialists and vice versa, it also indicates significant flight of defectors toward the right. According to recent election results, the Socialist Party and PCF combined now command no more than 35 percent of the electorate—down over 20 percentage points from the Socialist tally in 1981 and far short of the strength necessary to retain for the left a legislative plurality in 1986 or the presidency in 1988. [redacted]

This erosion of strength enhances prospects for a more centrist government in 1986 and perhaps for a return to a conservative government in 1988. Recent election results, together with growing Communist weakness and indications that leftwing Socialists have moderated their criticisms of the government, will encourage Mitterrand and Fabius to try to counter the right's advantage by adopting policies attractive to centrist voters who backed the Socialists in 1981. Fabius has already called for cooperation between the government and the center-right parties on issues such as social security reform. [redacted]

Over the longer term, the PCF's deterioration could widen differences in Communist ranks even further, particularly along "reformist" and "conservative" lines. Because reformist defections and splintering would remove most of the internal demands for reform, they might at first strengthen the hand of the hardliners within the party. If splinter groups increase in size and solidify, however, this would intensify and institutionalize the bickering among the Communists and, in the long term, could even raise the prospect of competing Communist parties, as in Spain. [redacted]

The PCF's decline does not guarantee a rightist victory. Indeed, it presents some complications, particularly by encouraging rightwing parties to try go-it-alone strategies against the left in the 1986 National Assembly election. The Gaullists, for example, may decide to break off their current limited cooperation with the extreme right National Front—which made impressive gains in the European Parliament voting in

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June and in regional elections in Corsica in July. Moreover, if the Socialists follow through with the widely expected introduction of proportional representation before the 1986 elections—a move that would increase the ability of small parties to win representation—we believe this would encourage the small center-right parties of the Giscardian Union pour la Democratie Francaise (UDF) also to resist joining the electoral coalitions that they formed in the European Parliament election. Thus, although at this point we expect the conservative parties to win a majority in the 1986 elections, the proper combination of rightist complacency, internal bickering, and small-party independence would allow the left to maintain power—perhaps in coalition with the center and center-right.⁶

Government Policies. The PCF withdrawal from the coalition, its declining strength, and its escalating criticisms of the government are unlikely to have much influence on the Mitterrand government's domestic or foreign policies. Nor are they likely to have more than a marginal influence on US interests. The Socialist government, which will retain a parliamentary majority at least until 1986, appears committed to continue its austerity program and even to strengthen it in significant ways, according to a variety of press and Embassy reports. The government will feel even less intimidated by threats from a PCF that is weaker than before. Communist opposition to Socialist policies heightens somewhat the risk of CGT-instigated labor unrest this fall and winter, but we strongly doubt Mitterrand will yield to Communist demands to resume expansionary economic policies and to alter in any major way his industrial restructuring program.

Mitterrand is even less vulnerable in matters of foreign policy because the French Constitution vests such personal power over external relations in the president and because of the strong public consensus that supports his efforts. Although the PCF will assail any government moves toward closer identification with the Alliance—including enhanced practical cooperation with NATO and improved bilateral ties

⁶ Mitterrand already enjoys formal support from the largest center parties—the Mouvement des Radicaux de Gauche (MRG) and the Ecologistes—but he will probably have to strike a new deal with them if their support becomes critical to leftist power.

with West Germany—these criticisms would not, in our view, alter French policies, especially where East-West issues are concerned:

- Mitterrand previously has undercut criticisms of his foreign policies by direct appeals to the public, and his firm stance toward the Soviets has broad support. 25X1
- Moreover, having allowed the PCF no voice in formulating foreign policy while the party was in the coalition, he is unlikely to be diverted by its criticisms while it is in opposition.

By the same token, the PCF's shift to the opposition is not likely to lead to marked improvement in French-US relations. The Mitterrand government's perception of French national interests will continue to generate loud complaints about US interest rates, what the government sees as self-serving technology transfer policies, and US protectionism generally. French officials will still blame US economic policies for Third World and French economic ills.

We believe, however, that the PCF's diminishing influence in French politics and society can only benefit US interests in the long term by further isolating the one major party in France that does not fundamentally support democratic principles or maintenance of a substantial contribution to Western collective defense. If, as we expect, the PCF's influence continues to decline, this will almost certainly ensure a more pragmatic consideration of a broad range of US policies by the French left and will strengthen the hand of those on the left who already approve of US positions.

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Appendix

Key Communist Party Officials

Georges Marchais

Secretary General of the PCF since 1972, Georges Marchais has served as a deputy in the National Assembly since 1973 and in the European Parliament since 1979. He was a skilled metalworker and a member of the CGT in France's nationalized aircraft industry from 1938 until 1951. During World War II he worked (some evidence suggests voluntarily), in a Bavarian aircraft factory. Marchais joined the PCF in 1947 and in 1951 became a full-time CGT official. Elected to the Political Bureau in 1959, he headed the organization sector throughout the 1960s and was deputy secretary general during 1970-72. According to press reports, Marchais, 64, has suffered two heart attacks. [redacted]

Henri Krasucki

Henri Krasucki has been Secretary General of the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) since 1982 and a member of the PCF Political Bureau since 1964. Krasucki, the son of Polish Jewish immigrants who were also Communists, joined the PCF in 1938. During World War II he fought in the Resistance before being deported to concentration camps at Auschwitz and later Buchenwald. After the war he worked as a pipefitter and joined the CGT and the PCF. Since the 1950s he has risen steadily within the ranks of both organizations. Krasucki is 60 years old. [redacted]

Charles Fiterman

The second-ranking official in the PCF, Charles Fiterman served as Minister of Transportation from May 1981 to July 1984. Fiterman, an electrician, joined the CGT and PCF in the early 1950s. He later directed the PCF's Central School for training party officials and served on the staff of then Secretary General Emile Waldeck Rochet. Elected to the Political Bureau in 1976, Fiterman took over the party's economic sector. He directed the party journal *Economie et Politique* from 1976 until 1979, when he assumed responsibility for propaganda. He was a deputy in the National Assembly from 1978 until he joined the Cabinet. Fiterman is 50 years old. [redacted]

Roland Leroy

Roland Leroy has been director of the official PCF newspaper *L'Humanite* since 1974. A hardliner, he has long been at odds with the more moderate PCF Secretary General, Georges Marchais. The son of a railroad worker, Leroy worked for the French National Railroad Company in the mid-1940s. He joined the PCF shortly thereafter, rising through the ranks to become secretary of the Central Committee in 1960 and a member of the Political Bureau in 1967. From 1967 until 1974 he was responsible for the party's intellectual sector. He was a deputy in the National Assembly during 1956-58 and 1967-81. Because of differences with Marchais, Leroy was removed from the PCF Secretariat in 1979, although he retained his position as director of *L'Humanite*. He has been president of the France-USSR Association since 1959. Leroy, 58, is the author of several books on Marxism-Leninism. [redacted]

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Gaston Plissonnier

Organizational coordinator of the PCF since 1970, Gaston Plissonnier is responsible for party administration. [redacted] Plissonnier, 71, may retire from his party position at the PCF congress in February 1985. A longtime Communist, Plissonnier left school at the age of 12 and became active in the Communist Youth. During World War II he fought in the Resistance near Toulouse. During the 1950s he served first as a liaison between the PCF and illegal Communist parties, such as that in Spain, and then was the Central Committee's secretary of administration. Elected to the Political Bureau in 1964, he was party spokesman for general policies during the late 1960s. [redacted]

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Anicet Le Pors

A member of the PCF Central Committee since 1979, Anicet Le Pors was Minister-Delegate to the Prime Minister in charge of Civil Service and Administrative Reform during 1981-83 and Secretary of State for Civil Service and Administrative Reform from March 1983 until the Communists left the government in July 1984. He holds degrees in meteorology and law and a doctorate in economics. In 1955 he joined the CGT, and three years later he became a member of the PCF. Elected to the Senate in 1977, Le Pors gave up his seat in 1981 when President Mitterrand appointed him to the Cabinet. Le Pors is 53 years old. [redacted]

Marcel Rigout

Minister of Professional Training from June 1981 to July 1984, Marcel Rigout is a PCF moderate who has publicly indicated some sympathy with the Italian brand of Eurocommunism and a desire for the party to cut its "umbilical cord" with the Soviet Union. Rigout, a former metalworker, joined the PCF in 1944 while serving in the Resistance. He was elected to the Central Committee in 1961. He served in the National Assembly during 1967-68 and 1973-81; he gave up his seat when he joined the Cabinet. Rigout has been an active and popular local politician. He was political director of a local Communist newspaper in central France and was a party spokesman for agricultural affairs. Rigout, 56, suffered a heart attack in 1982. [redacted]

Guy Hermier

Guy Hermier has directed the PCF weekly *Revolution* since its creation in 1980 and is considered one of the front-runners to take over direction of *L'Humanite* when Roland Leroy retires. According to US Embassy and press reporting, Hermier appears to be an opportunist who has risen in the PCF on the strength of his loyalty and efficiency. A party member since 1958, he was largely responsible for instilling ideological purity in the Communist Students Union during the 1960s. He was responsible for PCF youth and publications during 1974-78 and has directed the intellectual sector since at least 1981. Since 1974 Hermier has headed the important Bouches-du-Rhone party federation, and since 1978 he has been a deputy in the National Assembly, where he serves on the National Defense and Armed Forces Committee. He is 44 years old. [redacted]

Philippe Herzog

PCF hardliner Philippe Herzog has been the party's chief economic spokesman since at least 1979, when he was elected to the Political Bureau. A graduate of the Ecole Polytechnique, Herzog teaches economics at the University of Paris at Nanterre. He has worked on short-term economic forecasting at the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies and has been deputy editor in chief of the PCF journal *Economie et Politique*. Herzog, 44, often lectures at US universities and institutions and speaks some English. [redacted]

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Andre Lajoinie

A deputy in the National Assembly since 1978, Andre Lajoinie has served as president of the Communist group in that body since 1982. [redacted]

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Lajoinie's influence within the party leadership—and thus his chances of becoming secretary general—were declining. Lajoinie was a farmer until 1954, when he became a PCF official. During the 1960s he studied philosophy and political economics in Moscow. Elected to the PCF Political Bureau in 1976, he has specialized in agricultural affairs, directing a Communist weekly for farmers since 1977. Lajoinie is 54. [redacted]

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