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William F. Averyt Jr

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Students and advocates of Western-style liberal democracy have long believed they understood the conditions necessary for a stable democratic system to flourish. The most recent of these theories—the so-called “pluralist model” of democracy—has been widely accepted as the definitive description of how democracy works in both the United States and Western Europe. However, this examination of the French political scene, highlighting events since May 1968, challenges past assumptions of what makes democracy work. It strongly suggests that relevant political interactions be reexamined in the light of empirical data derived from countries other than Britain and the United States—if we are ever to gain a more realistic understanding of how democracy can function in alien political cultures.

FRANCE:

A POLITICAL CULTURE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF

An article prepared

by

Lieutenant (junior grade) William F. Averyt, Jr.

U.S. Naval Reserve

Introduction. On New Year's Day, 1968, the President of the French Republic addressed the French nation on the prospects of the coming year. De Gaulle was quite sanguine about the immediate future, and indeed he had reason to be. In the field of foreign policy, France had reasserted her primacy in the Common Market through her second veto of British application for membership, attacked the Achilles' heel of the world monetary system by demanding American gold for the mass of dollars accumulating in her central bank, and successfully continued her policy of rapprochement with the Eastern bloc. On the domestic front the general was no less optimistic. He himself was in his second 7-year term, his party had seemingly solved the problem of the absence of a stable majority which had plagued the governments of

the Fourth Republic, and the economy was prospering.

Five months later France was in the midst of the worst postwar crisis ever experienced by a Western nation. Major sections of Paris were barricaded, with pitched battles being fought in the streets; half of the labor force was on strike; universities throughout the country were seceding from the centralized educational system; the state radio and television network faced open revolt and takeover by its own staff; subways, buses, and railroads worked barely or not at all; and De Gaulle himself made a secret trip to the French Army headquarters in Baden Baden, Germany, to ascertain the military's support for him in the event that public order should collapse.

How could this happen in a major country of Western Europe, a “de-

veloped" nation supposedly immune to the problems of political instability which afflict the underdeveloped areas of the world? The answer to the events in France of May 1968—tentative though they may be—involve rethinking of much conventional wisdom about the operation of democratic regimes, class structure, and the effect of economic development on political behavior.

Furthermore, an understanding of the reasons for French political instability is essential to anyone interested in Western European politics and security questions. France is of key importance to defense considerations in the North Atlantic area. She is also in a position to profoundly influence the development of the Common Market, which will increasingly affect American commercial, monetary, and foreign policy interests.

A Model of Pluralist Democracy.

Until recently most Anglo-American as well as European political scientists have, implicitly or explicitly, held certain perceptions of democracy which they utilized in their consideration of Western regimes. In the past 5 years or so, students of the subject have become increasingly dissatisfied with this rather stereotypical model. The model, based as it is on generalizations drawn from the Anglo-American experience, is quite useless in understanding the democratic regimes of continental Europe.¹ The author shall, therefore, examine the salient features of the postwar French political system and, by confronting the Anglo-American model with the realities of the French experience, attempt to develop an alternative model which would be of greater use in studying the regimes of continental Europe.

The longstanding model of pluralist democracy contained the following propositions: Men are the best judges of their own interests. More accurate information about reality helps them to act more wisely—hence freedom of speech,

freedom of press, full and open discussion of differing views, et cetera. Through some agreed upon procedure, men choose their own governors and exercise control over them while they are in power. (The specific process of wielding power could be one of a large number of variations on the theme of presidential and/or parliamentary democracy.) It is necessary to mobilize the population as much as possible, to interest all citizens in the political system, so that all views will be represented and discussed. A variety of intermediary organizations in which citizens can participate is essential to a sense of civic involvement and helps to create bonds between citizens of diverse backgrounds. (These voluntary organizations which overlap the cleavages of society are considered a vital part of the pluralist model.) Individual views on a certain course of action meet in a free marketplace of ideas, and the resulting decision represents the common good.

Economics was a bad word when 19th century liberals developed the model of democracy sketched above. It represented a domain of activity supposedly completely separate from politics. The 19th century liberals did not fully realize how widespread poverty rendered their ideal scheme of democracy farcical. However, in the 20th century, under the attacks of Marxist thought and the worldwide depression of the 1930's, the original theory of liberal democracy was expanded to take into account the challenge of economic development.

Poverty was indeed bad, not only because of its regrettable effects on the human beings involved, but also because it bred radical sentiments and revolutionary potential which might wreck the entire system. Therefore, through government policies of economic expansion, full employment, and a minimum of inflation, lower class poverty could be assuaged and perhaps ended. The workers could assure that this process

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would occur by expressing their views and electing representatives. Increasing affluence would result in the lower classes abandoning their radicalism, adopting a middle class life style, and being fully integrated into the system.

This summary of the pluralist model is, of course, never duplicated in real life; it is based on generalizations which were thought to have a degree of validity for all Western democracies. But are its fundamental assumptions valid? Does it not assume that the polity is considered the end having primacy over all others, e.g., over religious ends? Does it not assume that the political culture is homogeneous, i.e., that citizens share common ideas, values, expectations? That they share a common "cognitive map" of the political universe? Does it not assume that there are no insoluble problems? That economic development will lead to the adoption of middle class values and a decrease in radicalism?

The above questions are definitely relevant to the French case, and they apply to enough of the nations in Western Europe so that we should begin the task of rethinking the pluralist model of democracy.

French Political Culture. In discussing French instability, one soon turns to the question of basic attitudes toward authority in general and political authority in particular. The concept of *political culture* which has been developed in the past decade is extremely useful in discussing political attitudes. A political culture is the composite of values, emotions, and attitudes concerning the nature of authority in a society. An individual, through the process of *political socialization*, learns about the authority patterns by contact with various groups and institutions, beginning with the family and including school, the church, labor unions, political parties, et cetera.

If one thinks of political culture as an alphabet, then the process of

arranging the letters into words is determined by the process of socialization which the citizen has undergone. The way a Frenchman looks at political events . . . has much to do with the attitudes he has observed and learned in both the social and in the political realms.²

With the concepts of political culture and political socialization as a framework, we may begin to examine the pattern of political activity in France.

The Revolution of 1789 is the great fissure in French history, and its divisive influence is felt to this day. Unlike the American Revolution, which provided the basis for a broad consensus for the future to build upon, the French Revolution involved camps of equal strength; it was a test of wills which would inevitably leave behind deep and abiding hatreds among major segments of the society.

America never had a feudal aristocracy, a monarchy, or an established church supported by major social groups; it merely had to throw off British rule.³ The victorious colonies also removed a potential source of future opposition when, in violation of the Treaty of Paris of 1783 by which their independence was recognized, they confiscated the property of the Loyalists (about one-third of the population) and expelled them. Thus the new nation could proceed with a fairly homogeneous middle class population (minus, of course, the slaves). France, on the other hand, was not quite as successful in disposing of potential sources of future opposition. After the defeat of Napoleon in 1814, the monarchy returned to Paris together with the exiled nobility and proceeded to reestablish the old regime. The parties favoring monarchy and republic were so evenly balanced that the question of France's regime was not laid to rest until the last decades of the 19th century. By that time, in the short space of a century,

France had already experienced one constitutional monarchy, three republics, and two empires.

The role of the church in French life was also closely bound up with these conflicts. Furthermore, just as the republican form of government was taking root in the 1880's, the Third Republic had to face the problems posed by a new industrial proletariat. Socialism entered the arena just as the monarchy made its departure.

Thus the French nation was divided not only on questions of policy—this was true of every nation facing the second industrial revolution at the end of the 19th century—but it was divided concerning the very basis of its government. In America no sane politician would campaign on a platform of hostility to the Declaration of Independence; in France politicians not only could, but actually did the equivalent of this right up to the postwar period. The very symbols of nationhood—the flag, anthem, and motto—were not reflections of consensus but sources of divisiveness emanating from the fragmented nature of French society.⁴

French Political Participation. The historical roots of social divisions in France go back very far indeed. The exact nature of these divisions in post-war France has prompted much investigation. Historical and political research has often laid such stress on the unique and perplexing characteristics of French life that the broader underlying forces are obscured. Instead of examining the roots of such confusing phenomena as the apparently high ideological content of French politics allied with a seeming apathy toward the outcome of the political process, writers have merely presented these phenomena as “paradoxes” and left it at that.⁵ The statements below represent the results of recent efforts to comprehend certain traits of French political life; it will be seen that the French voter does not

belong to a fundamentally different species from his American counterpart.

• The average Frenchman exhibits lower interest in political parties and lower party allegiance than the average American. When asked to specify the party of their choice, if they had one, only 45 percent of the Frenchmen interviewed did so, in contrast to 75 percent of Americans polled.⁶ This lower degree of involvement in the political process and lack of knowledge about the way it operates can probably be traced back to the earliest socialization processes. There is a lack of comprehensive data about this most important aspect of the political system, but available evidence indicates a socialization process which is less complete than the American one. For example, a recent study of French schoolchildren shows that a surprising 86 percent of pupils 11 years of age could not give any answer to the question “What do political parties do?” In contrast, only 5 percent of American schoolchildren 10 years of age were unable to reply to a similar question.⁷

• Contrary to popular belief, the rapid succession of cabinets during the Fourth Republic (1946-1958) was not the result of a cynical parliamentary game in which aspiring ministers schemed to bring about the fall of the Government so that they themselves could assume office in the next cabinet. On the contrary, these *ministrables* (the French term for a deputy in Parliament who was a potential candidate for minister) were among the staunchest supporters of cabinets. Since many of them had already served in a previous cabinet, they realized the difficulties involved in governing the nation. This analysis refutes the accusation made so frequently against the *ministrables* by De Gaulle (as well as by political scientists), who never ceased to condemn and ridicule the “parliamentary game” of cabinet turnover.⁸

• The French electorate has demon-

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strated no erratic shifting of support during the Fourth or Fifth Republics. In the Fourth Republic the major parties were the Communists, drawing support from the workers and alienated farmers; the Socialists, supported by the civil servants; the MRP (Mouvement Republicain Populaire), which was formed by progressive Catholics interested in social welfare programs; and the Radicals, backed by those members of the middle class favoring an old style, laissez-faire economy. These parties maintained their share of the popular vote from 1946 to 1958, the only exceptions being three "flash" movements drawing support from wide sections of the population: the Gaullist RPF (Rassemblement du Peuple Français), 1947-1953; Mendès-France's movement to reform the representative system, 1954-1957; and the Poujadist movement of disgruntled small shopkeepers, 1954-1956. Votes were suddenly transferred to these movements from the main parties, only to return to the older pattern shortly afterward.⁹ In the Fifth Republic the Gaullists have eaten into the bases of Communist and MRP support, but there has been no erratic, inexplicable shift of votes.¹⁰ Thus, during the past 25 years, the French political scene manifested a pattern of broad evolution and development.

This finding, linked with the evidence for the first proposition concerning the Frenchman's low degree of party allegiance, suggests the reluctance to become overly involved with political groups. (We shall see below that suspicion and distrust of the state is widespread in French society.) Although the French voter has shown consistency in party support during the past two decades, he is at the same time hesitant to assert that he bears allegiance to the party for which he votes. There is another factor which may have a bearing on this particular point: Most French voters have difficulty understanding the complicated ideological

programs of their parties, which may help to explain the low degree of party identification.

This distance that the average Frenchman maintains between himself and his party may be traced back to his earliest political socialization, i.e., what he learns about politics in the family environment. American studies uniformly show that a person's political preference correlates most closely with his father's party. This is also true of France. What accounts for the difference in degree of party involvement is the low degree of political communication in the French family. The French father does not easily discuss and debate current political issues within the family. Although the majority of American voters can easily recall their father's party affiliation or preference, the majority of French voters cannot. Their reply to this type of question is frequently that their father did not discuss his party choice with the family. Hence, it is not surprising that so many French voters are ambiguous about their own party preference.¹¹ This, and other evidence, indicates the secretiveness which the French family maintains not only in its relations with the outside world, but among its own members, as well as its extreme reluctance to disturb the autonomy of each individual. Distrust and secrecy mark the Frenchman's view of political and social issues.¹²

If these three propositions about the nature of political participation in France are, in fact, true, then the nature of France's political problems is considerably different from what has been popularly assumed. We see a system in which historical parties continue to exist and receive substantial shares of the vote, but which lack followers with a strong sense of allegiance. The party elites continue to speak in rigid ideological terms and thus are unable to make the frequent compromises necessitated by the everyday political realities. There is good evidence available that the party

elites at the top are prevented from making these necessary compromises because of lower level party militants within their party who are at the same time more radical and less in contact with the actual problems of wielding power: "[Centralization] deprives [the party militant] of nearby objectives; it forbids him any partial experience of government; it places him in a sort of exile. The life of the militant is directed toward the center, whence come the news, passwords, lectures . . ." ¹³ This centralization of the political system in France permits almost no political problem solving at the grassroots level. ¹⁴

The question of the role of the party militants is especially interesting, since their apparently high involvement and fervor are at variance with what we have said about the general population. In the Fourth Republic, given the hostility of both extremes (the Communists and the Gaullists) who often attained almost half the popular vote, the parties of the center (Socialists, MRP, Radicals, and Moderates) were left with very little room for maneuver in forming coalition governments. Furthermore, the old historical quarrels continually returned to plague them when cooperation was necessary. ¹⁵ A brief look at the way in which intraparty quarrels impinged on relations among the parties will illuminate the role of the party militants.

The Socialist Party, of course, traces its origin back to the classical Marxist working class parties. In the postwar period, however, only 20 percent of the Socialist electorate were workers; the majority were middle class civil servants, white collar, et cetera. The party militants consisted of the old-line party activists, who tried to keep the party from backsliding into moderate reformism, and the intellectuals running the party's journal, the *Revue Socialiste*, who tried to maintain doctrinal rigor among party leaders. ¹⁶

The MRP was the creation of Catholics who tried to apply the church's new

doctrines of social justice to the French situation. The party was continually torn by quarrels between those party members emphasizing social and economic reforms and those Catholic members who saw property threatened whenever social welfare was discussed. ¹⁷

The third important center party, the Radicals, was a loose amalgam of local notables adhering to a laissez-faire philosophy in the social and economic realms. Their philosophy of anarchic individualism rendered concerted action impossible. ¹⁸

We therefore face a situation in which the average French voter was somewhat less involved in politics than the American voter, while the middle level party activists were more ideological in their approach than their American counterparts:

... aside from the surge movements, the general public played a rather passive role in the Assembly's conflicts. Party activists or militants, however, especially among the Socialists and MRP, seemed to pull the parties away from one another; they perpetuated these parties' internal divisions in the Assembly and heightened the dissension in Socialist congresses. ¹⁹

Among these middle level party militants, historical divisions in the French body politic continued to exist, and the militants in turn greatly influenced the parties at the national level.

Attitudes Toward the Political System. With these three characteristics of French political participation as a background, we can now examine the process by which inputs into the system (demands) are processed into outputs (policies).

The extreme centralization of the French system has made it impossible for local organs of government to decide

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even the most insignificant issues. If a village wants to build a school, pave a road, or lay new sewage pipes, an appropriate ministry in Paris or the prefect must give its approval. There is no decisionmaking nor contact with power on the local level. Power emanates from a distant center, from some remote entity called "the state." Even at the early stages of political socialization, i.e., in the schools, this is evident. There are no civic courses, no instruction in the actual operation of the regime.²⁰

Together with the remoteness of the state, one finds a conception of the state as a potentially hostile, dangerous, and untrustworthy institution from which it is necessary to remain aloof. In the eyes of the Frenchman, the state is "not a referee, but a player—and probably a dirty player."²¹ This type of attitude also characterizes the French labor movement. Whereas English or German labor has traditionally worked in close cooperation with the Socialist Party, indeed, been directed by the party, French labor from the beginning looked with suspicion upon the political system, even upon the Socialist Party. Political action could only involve the labor movement with the doubledealing of politicians; the best course of action was that which lay outside political channels—the general strike being the favorite tactic of French labor to exert pressure on the Government.²² (Recourse to the general strike and suspicion of the party which is traditionally the workers' party, i.e., the Communist Party, were well manifested in the events of May 1968.)

Thus, specific historical factors have resulted in a downgrading of Parliament. Also, the complex influence of French patterns of political participation had already created before World War II a situation in which the state seemed remote and hostile to the interests of the ordinary Frenchman, who was isolated from his fellow citizens as well by

the deep divisions in French society.

Mention has already been made of the highly divided political culture of France. This has its roots in great and deep social divisions: Catholic vs. anti-Catholic, employer vs. worker, sharecropper vs. rich farmer, and small storeowner vs. big businessman.²³ One factor which could conceivably override such deep social divisions would be the voluntary organizations whose memberships overlap the cleavages, i.e., a neighborhood self-improvement association which might include homeowners, tenants, landlords, businessmen, local officials, et cetera. In France, however, existing voluntary organizations do not have memberships which overlap social cleavages; rather, they reinforce them. For example, a French worker may belong to a Communist union, read a Communist newspaper, attend a Communist night school, et cetera; whereas an American worker may belong to a pro-Democratic union; read a rightwing newspaper; belong to a PTA including upper, middle, and lower class citizens, Catholics, Protestants, and Jews, et cetera. Furthermore, civic associations with a political goal were (and are) rare in France. What purpose would they serve when all political decisions are made in Paris? If an organization does happen to be political in nature, it merely forwards citizens' demands to Paris so that the political elites are faced with raw, unprocessed, "unaggregated" demands, making compromise among rigid alternatives all the more difficult.²⁴

The elites in Parliament during the Fourth Republic also faced specific historical circumstances which rendered the problem of governing more difficult. In the early years of the Fourth Republic, 1947-1951, the regime faced a deadlock. The Communists on the left and the Gaullists on the right had withdrawn their support for the parliamentary regime, and by 1951 almost one-half of all votes cast were for these two parties

which had sworn to keep the regime from working.²⁵

The Fifth Republic was designed to avoid the pitfalls of the Fourth. It established a presidential, as opposed to a parliamentary, regime, but the confusing constitutional questions of the Fifth Republic may be omitted here. The basic dilemma was quite simple—how is it possible to institutionalize a regime which is constructed around one man? The problem was certainly aggravated by De Gaulle's practice of dealing semilegally with his own Constitution when it suited his purposes. One example: in order to amend the Constitution to permit direct, popular election of the President of the Republic, De Gaulle did not use article 89 of the Constitution, which prescribes the amendment procedure, but used instead article 11, which authorizes a popular referendum on proposed laws concerning "the organization of the public powers." This maneuver was criticized as a blatant attempt to avoid the more complicated procedures called for by the Constitution (and the hostility of the Senate, which would have to consider the proposed law). The maneuver was condemned by most jurists, the Conseil d'Etat, and the Conseil Constitutionnel, and Parliament overthrew the Government on this issue on 5 October 1962. Yet De Gaulle proceeded to hold the referendum, which resulted in the approval of the law.²⁶

The years of De Gaulle's rule saw many examples of this arbitrary wielding of power, which only aggravated the problem of institutionalizing the regime. Since De Gaulle's departure the party system has shown signs of developing into a loose biparty system, in which the Gaullists and their allies form the majority bloc and the center-left parties, in loose alliance with the Communists, form the opposition. It is impossible to speculate on the future evolution of the party system, however.

Traits of the French System. We thus have a centralized political system in which channels of communication between elites and masses are poor. The elites must compromise but are attacked by their own party militants for doing so. The citizenry is alienated from the central Government and has no expectations of fairness in dealing with it.

It is necessary at this point to gain some perspective on the problem. We need to compare the attributes of the French system with other European countries which possess more stable regimes while possessing, at the same time, many of the attributes of French society. We may thus discover which specific factors are responsible for the peculiar instability of the French political system.

We know that stable democracy can be achieved with a multiparty system: Austria, the Netherlands, West Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Switzerland are all evidence of this. Furthermore, a multiparty system does not necessarily imply apathy on the part of the voters; Norway, for example, has six political parties, and party attachments are as widespread as in the United States.²⁷

Stable democracy can also exist in a highly divided society; witness Austria, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. The case of the Netherlands is especially interesting because it, like France, contradicts in so many ways the model of pluralist democracy. One finds in the Netherlands a multitude of voluntary organizations which reinforce social cleavages, widespread apathy among the citizenry, government by elites in the atmosphere of secrecy, and a highly divided society (Calvinist, Catholic, liberal secular, and working class secular). Yet there are several crucial differences between the Netherlands and France. There is the narrow but strongly held consensus accepted by all Dutch social groups that the nation should

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continue to be a monarchy (the House of Orange provides an important symbol of unity). Citizens give deference to the Government because they have faith that it will treat them fairly. Finally, the elites are able to reach compromises at the highest levels of the political system because of the particular mixture of deference and secrecy characteristic of Dutch politics.²⁸

The Dutch case suggests that the ideal model of pluralist democracy does not even remotely apply to many nations of continental Europe; indeed, it should be seen merely as an Anglo-American system writ large. It is therefore necessary to construct an alternative model which may prove useful in explaining many continental European political systems.

Economic Development and the French System. Rapid economic change had especially marked effects on the two groups in French society which played an important part in the events of May 1968: the students and the workers. Here it is important to note the failure of the Government and its economic plans *even on their own terms*, i.e., the modernization of France.²⁹ According to the Anglo-American model, economic development should go hand in hand with better education for students in order to enable them to become skilled, productive members of society. Economic development should also mean increasing affluence for workers, thereby reducing radicalism, rendering political debates less ideological, and making a middle class life style available to the working class.

Keeping in mind this ideal type of development, let us confront the realities of the French case. The population explosion after World War II meant a greatly expanded university population by the 1960's. In 1958 there were 170,000 university students in France; 10 years later there were 600,000.

Despite a university population increase of over 300 percent in 10 years' time, the Government took inadequate steps to prepare for such an influx of students. In fact, the most apparent step taken by Paris in response to the crisis in higher education was merely to fire seven Ministers of Education in a decade. Rather than address the hard questions involved in university reform, the Government chose to pursue the sterile exercise of setting up and subsequently knocking down a series of scapegoats.³⁰ The rigid centralization of the political system only aggravated the problem:

Centralization meant that when the students took on the university authorities they directly challenged the authority of the State. It meant that the university authorities could make no real concessions without consulting the Minister [of Education], a man who in May 1968 had been sitting for 15 months on a file full of incomplete reforms for fear of controversy which might upset the General and compromise his own political future.³¹

The university was failing to provide opportunities for an education leading to a viable and productive career. Moreover, the economy could not absorb the large number of graduates leaving the university each year. Hence the two-pronged and contradictory accusation leveled by the students against the "establishment": On the one hand, they condemned the entire neocapitalist structure and called for its utter destruction; on the other hand, they complained that they could not find jobs within this structure.³²

With regard to the workers, the evolution of the French situation diverged considerably from the ideal model sketched above. Far from reducing radicalism, economic development in the French case actually seemed to increase it.

As modernization increased in rural areas, farm laborers left rural regions and settled in urban industrial centers. This abundant supply of industrial labor helped to keep wages from rising too fast: in 1968 the French laborer's wages were the second lowest in the Common Market.³³ More generally the workers had, to a large extent, been paying for the economic development of the entire nation, with little voice concerning the direction the process was taking. The Government's economic plan was drawn up in councils in which big business and the Government ministries exercised preponderant influence.³⁴ The economic plan for the mid-1960's raised the profit margin for business entrepreneurs, held down wage raises for workers, and neglected the development of public services.³⁵ Control of inflation, which ate into the meager wage increases gained by labor, was blocked by powerful economic interests who were big borrowers and who therefore had no desire to see the inflation end.³⁶ Furthermore, the Government reduced social security benefits in 1967.³⁷ The unions also lacked formal recognition by employers of the type guaranteed to U.S. workers by the Wagner Act.³⁸ All of these developments left the workers feeling that their interests were not being fairly represented and that there was no regular channel through which they could make their protests heard and receive adequate consideration for their position.

The democratic pluralist model that we have been considering throughout this essay asserts that affluence leads to integration of workers within the system and a consequent decline of radicalism. The data for France in the 1950's seem to show that this view needs serious revision, and the 1968 outbreaks probably prove that there has been no significant change in the 1960's. A recent study by Hamilton³⁹ represents an incisive analysis of the thesis that "affluence means conservatism and mid-

dle class life styles." He argues that, on the contrary, affluence in the French case increases radicalism by making available more recruits for Communist indoctrination.

Hamilton shows that French industrialization has drawn labor from rural areas into medium-size, industrial towns where Communist trade unions and the Communist Party are strong. These young workers are receptive to Communist ideology, since they have already been socialized in an area of agrarian radicalism, i.e., central-southern France. The radicalism of this central-southern region owes its origins to the persistence of sharecropping tenancy, which has a high conflict potential between landlord and tenant in comparison with other forms of farming. In addition, the aristocratic and clerical leaders who might have exercised a dampening influence on opinions have long since moved away. These rural laborers, therefore, are already radical when they leave the farms to move to the cities.⁴⁰

When these workers migrate to industrial areas, they merely expand the number of workers susceptible to the influence of strong Communist trade unions. Evidence shows that if the wages of these workers do increase, they still do not change their life style or tone down their radicalism. They maintain a working class culture; to adopt middle class habits would mean ostracism, and they have little desire to change their way of life in any case. The example of skilled workers is revealing. Even when their salaries equal those of white collar workers, they continue to identify with the poorer, unskilled workers and not with their white collar counterparts who may be making as much money as they do. This, after all, is not so surprising; men do not alter their habits merely because an economic index has changed by a few percentage points. Rather, their actions are guided by the influence of peer groups—their neighbors, their family, their fellow

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workers, all of whom participate in a working class culture.⁴¹

Hamilton thus proves that affluence need not lead to the decline of radicalism; indeed, under certain conditions it may actually increase it. (These findings, published in 1967, were amply confirmed in 1968.)

We must now apply Hamilton's findings to our previous conclusions about the nature of political participation in France. It was found that French voters did not have a strong identification with political parties. The party elites seemed remote and excessively ideological; too many parties existed; and they wasted their time splitting hairs, according to the voters. Under these conditions, increasing radicalism fostered by economic development would seek an outlet outside of the regular channels of the political system. The parties were incapable of providing an adequate outlet for dealing with the discontent of the workers.

During May and June 1968, wildcat strikes swept across France, perhaps stunning the Communist Party more than the Government. Although the party was devoted to the same revolutionary rhetoric which it had been mouthing for decades, it was now painfully trying to integrate itself into the political system, claiming that it advocated a seizure of power through peaceful means while cooperating increasingly with the non-Communist Parties of the left. The party tried to control the workers' rebellion by splitting the workers from the student movement, but with little success. After the CGT (the Communist-controlled labor union) and other unions had negotiated the so-called Grenelle accords with employers to end the strike, the workers rejected them decisively. They also retaliated against the Communist Party for its conservatism by defecting massively during the June 1968 legislative elections, causing the Communists to lose half their seats in Parliament.⁴²

The rebellion of May 1968 is of great interest to students of French politics for at least two reasons. First, what many observers had suspected was now made quite clear: the Communist Party was being outdistanced by the workers, who were willing to go to great lengths to achieve better treatment. The Communist Party, in its desire to present itself to the French public at large as a respectable participant in the political process, alienated many of its supporters while failing to gain other sources of support. Second, though they began from different premises, the student movement and the workers found common ground for action against a system which both groups condemned for its utter unwillingness to discuss its policies with the very groups which would be most influenced by them.

A Divided Polity Model. The pluralist model of democracy tells us nothing about societies which are deeply divided and which lack a strong, broad consensus about the nature of the political system. Because of its assumptions about a concerned citizenry, ample opportunities to influence and control the governing elites, and free and vigorous discussion of issues, it is of no use in discussions of societies which have none of these attributes. Let us now try to present some general characteristics of an alternative model, based on the French and Dutch cases, which may be more useful in examining the many continental European democracies which possess few of the characteristics of a pluralist democracy.

We will assume that the country under discussion is rigorously divided with respect to social class and/or religion. Because of its political culture, the population is apathetic about politics and does not possess direct controls on the governing elites. Under which conditions is it possible for this political system to survive while maintaining a stable democratic regime?

• At the very minimum there must be a consensus that all groups profit more from remaining within the present system than by destroying it. This consensus may find powerful symbolic support from the existence of a respected monarchy, a love for the fatherland, or a realization of the necessity of cohesion because of external enemies. The ease with which French regimes have been destroyed seems to demonstrate that powerful groups often feel that they can benefit more by the creation of a new system than by remaining within the present one.

• The distance which the mass of the populace feels between itself and the centers of political power must be balanced by a feeling that those elites who occupy the centers of power sincerely seek the common good. The cynicism and distrust prevailing throughout the French political culture obviously make this impossible in the near future.

• The political leaders must feel the necessity to make compromises. If the second condition is fulfilled, i.e., if voters have confidence in their leaders, it will obviously be easier for these leaders to make political compromises.

In summary, if the polity exhibits these characteristics, the parliamentary process will not consist of a conflict between Government and opposition but, instead, will involve a continual

process of compromise and accommodation joined with a genuine will to find a workable solution.

The above model is substantially different from the model of pluralist democracy, yet it provides the possibility of stability and democracy. When it is applied to postwar France, one may conclude that the French political system has indeed been condemned for the wrong reasons. This essay cannot conclude on an optimistic note with regard to the future of the French system. While it is prevented from operating in a manner similar to that described by the pluralist model, it is also prevented from imitating the divided polity model because it lacks the essential qualities of consensus, deference, and compromise.

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Lt. (jg.) William F. Averyt, Jr., U.S. Naval Reserve, did his undergraduate work in American studies at the University of Alabama. He holds master's degrees from the University of Strasbourg in European

studies and from Johns Hopkins University in international relations. Lieutenant (junior grade) Averyt gained his commission in the Naval Reserve through the Officer Candidate School at Newport and is currently assigned to the faculty of the College of Naval Warfare.

FOOTNOTES

1. A major contribution to a reexamination of continental European regimes is Robert A. Dahl, ed., *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

2. Henry W. Ehrmann, *Politics in France* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968), p. 45.

3. Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955).

4. Herbert Luethy, *France Against Herself* (New York: Praeger, 1955), ch. 3.

5. For a critique of this type of approach to French politics, see Fred Greenstein and Sidney Tarrow, "The Study of French Political Socialization," *World Politics*, October 1969, p. 95-99.

6. Philip Converse and Georges Dupeux, "Politicization of the Electorate in France and the United States," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Spring 1962, p. 1-23.

7. Greenstein and Tarrow, p. 113.

8. Duncan MacRae, Jr., *Parliament, Parties, and Society in France 1946-1958* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967), p. 186-88, 213.

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9. *Ibid.*, p. 230.
10. Ehrmann, p. 210-244.
11. Converse and Dupeux, p. 11-13.
12. Ehrmann, p. 60.
13. Charles Brindillac, "Decoloniser La France," *Esprit*, December 1957, p. 802, quoted in MacRae, p. 32.
14. MacRae, p. 301.
15. David S. McLellan, "Ministerial Instability and the Lack of Internal Cohesion in French Parties," *World Affairs*, April 1957, p. 3-24.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
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24. MacRae, p. 28ff. and Gabriel Almond, "Comparative Political Systems," *Journal of Politics*, August 1956, p. 391-409.
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27. Converse and Dupeux, p. 11.
28. Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), chap. VII.
29. Stephen S. Cohen, *Modern Capitalist Planning: the French Model* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969), p. 239.
30. Ehrmann, p. 322-23.
31. David Goldey, "The Events of May and the French General Election of June 1968," *Parliamentary Affairs*, Autumn 1968, p. 310.
32. Ehrmann, p. 321-43.
33. Peter Steinfels, "French Revolution 1968," *Commonweal*, July 1968, p. 495.
34. Cohen, p. 191-99; Richard B. DuBoff, "The Decline of Economic Planning in France," *Western Political Quarterly*, March 1968, p. 108.
35. Cohen, p. 186.
36. DuBoff, p. 100.
37. John Ardagh, *The New French Revolution* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 298.
38. Cohen, p. 196.
39. Richard F. Hamdton, *Affluence and the French Worker in the Fourth Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 196.
40. *Ibid.*, chap. VI.
41. *Ibid.*, chap. IV and XII.
42. Steinfels; David B. Goldey, "The Events of May and the French General Election of June, 1968," *Parliamentary Affairs*, Spring 1969, p. 116-33.



Political thought in France is either nostalgic or utopian.

Raymond Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectual*,
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