

THE INTERNAL DYNAMICS OF GAULLISM

1958-1969

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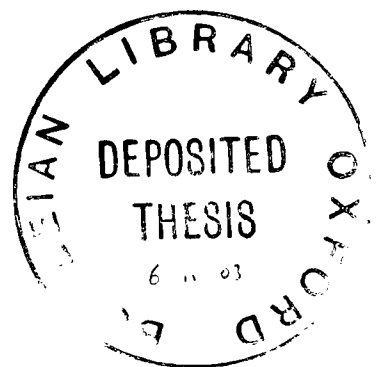


TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page.
Short abstract	1.
Long abstract	3.
<u>Chapter 1</u>	
<u>Introduction</u>	12.
Summary	12.
Historiographical Overview	14.
- The charismatic figure of de Gaulle	14.
- Political science and its priorities	17.
- History and its priorities	21.
Gaullism and contemporaries	24.
The Internal Dynamics of Gaullism	29.
<u>Chapter 2</u>	
<u>Gaullism and Government</u>	33.
•	
Summary	33.
The Gaullist Philosophy of Government	35.
Gaullists in Government: Interpretations	52.
Gaullists in Government: The Dynamics of Government	64.
Conclusion	101.

<u>Chapter 3</u>	<u>Gaullism and the Gaullist party</u>	103.
	Summary	103.
	Introduction	106.
	The Origins of the UNR	109.
	The Role of the UNR	120.
	The Algerian Problem and the UNR	130.
	The UNR-UDT, 1962-1967	157.
	Reinventing the party, 1967-1969	171.
	Conclusion	178.
 <u>Chapter 4</u>	 <u>Gaullism and Parliament</u>	 181.
	Summary	181.
	Introduction	184.
	Political Backgrounds of Deputies	187.
	The Early Years of the Fifth Republic	205.
	Influencing Government Policy	225.
	<i>The Groupes d'études spécialisés</i>	225.
	Informal Contacts	244.
	Speeches in the National Assembly	250.
	Conclusion	303.
 <u>Chapter 5</u>	 <u>Gaullism and the localities</u>	 306.
	Summary	306.
	Historiography	309.
	The Structure of the Gaullist Party	314.
	Local Gaullist Journals	344.
	Conclusion	371.
 <u>Chapter 6</u>	 <u>Conclusion</u>	 374.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	Following Page
"Le stand des automates radio-guidés"	62.
"Eh bien! ça va être drôle!"	186.
"Une chambre qui nous tombe du ciel!"	190.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CIANAS	Comité d'information et d'action nationale de l'Algérie et du Sahara
CNIP	Centre national des indépendants et paysans
CNJA	Centre national des jeunes agriculteurs
CR	Convention républicaine
CSP	Comité de salut public
ENS	Ecole normale supérieure
FFC	Forces françaises combattantes
FLN	Front de libération nationale
FNSEA	Fédération national des syndicats d'exploitants agricoles
GES	Groupe d'études spécialisé (National Assembly)
MRP	Mouvement républicain populaire
OAS	Organisation armée secrète
PCF	Parti communiste français
RAF	Rassemblement pour l'Algérie française
RI	Républicains indépendants
RPF	Rassemblement du peuple français
RPR	Rassemblement pour la république
RS	(Centre national des) républicains sociaux
SAFER	Sociétés d'Aménagement Foncier et d'Etablissement Rural
SFIO	Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière (Socialist)
SICA	Société d'intérêts collectifs agricoles

UDR	Union des démocrates pour la république
UDSR	Union démocratique et socialiste de la résistance
UDT	Union démocratique du travail
UFIE	Union française des industries d'exportation
UNR	Union pour la nouvelle république
URF	Union pour le renouveau français
USRAF	Union pour le salut et le renouveau de l'Algérie française

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THE INTERNAL DYNAMICS OF GAULLISM, 1958-1969

D. PHIL. THESIS, HILARY 2001

JONATHAN WATSON, BALLIOL

SHORT ABSTRACT

This thesis assesses the contributions of Gaullists to the political practice of Gaullism during the 1960s. Many of those who have written about Gaullism - historians, political scientists, journalists and politicians alike - have tended to focus too narrowly on the personality, beliefs and actions of Charles de Gaulle. Much analysis has been devoted to the General's approach to government, both its substance and its style. However, neglect of the activities of his political associates and supporters has led to an incomplete understanding of the broader political phenomenon that he inspired. This thesis aims to redress this imbalance by highlighting the ways in which individual Gaullists sought to contribute to the policies of successive Gaullist governments during the 1960s and assesses the importance of these contributions in creating an identity for the Gaullist party which, while not always wholly distinct from de Gaulle and though it certainly never developed to the point of outright opposition to him, did lay the foundations for a political movement which could survive the President's eventual departure from office. The research reveals 1960s Gaullism as a much more volatile and heterogeneous phenomenon than has perhaps previously been admitted by some commentators.

The thesis considers the political activities of Gaullists at all levels of the movement. First of all, it examines the way in which government was conducted by Gaullist ministers, and argues that

their contributions to the identity of the Gaullist movement have been underestimated. In addition, it reveals how there were leading figures within the Gaullist party who attempted to define ways in which Gaullists could contribute to Gaullism in government. Although they never questioned the loyalty of the Gaullist movement to its leader, their awareness of the need for Gaullists to create their own political identity led them to place less emphasis on the importance of the historical figure of de Gaulle to the modern political force which Gaullism would become. The thesis then highlights the neglected fact that Gaullist deputies frequently sought to contribute in their own individual manner to Gaullist government policies in their speeches in the National Assembly. It concludes with an examination of the varied and conflicting comments made on the subject of Gaullism and Gaullist policies by local party members in their local bulletins.

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LONG ABSTRACT

I came to this subject with a clear sense of purpose, which was to contribute to a more historical understanding of Gaullism. This objective arose in part from dissatisfaction with existing approaches to the subject. The existing literature on Gaullism has many real virtues; it is plentiful, and is both stimulating and engaging. Yet as a historian it seemed to me that in terms of its consideration of Gaullism as a dynamic and complex political movement, it also suffered from real shortcomings.

My interest in Gaullism arose from my observation of the activities of contemporary Gaullist politicians during my first extended stay in France in 1991-2. It seemed to me that the spectacle of divisions within the Gaullist movement in the 1990s might provide a useful perspective on the 1960s. When the award of a three-year British Academy studentship enabled me to research the subject in greater depth, I identified a certain number of assumptions in the secondary literature I consulted. The mere suspicion of the existence of a consensus was enough to awaken my desire to question. This thesis is the result of this desire. Ideas which seemed to dominate Gaullist scholarship have been deliberately tested. In the process, a challenging point of view was adopted, and evidence sought that would support that point of view. In this way an attempt was made to make a modest contribution to the developing historiography on France in the 1960s.

The major cause of my unease with the literature on Gaullism I encountered was the existence of strongly rooted opinions concerning the Gaullist movement in the 1960s and concerning the ideas which inspired it. The first and most obvious of these was the widespread assumption that the study of Gaullism meant studying de Gaulle - that the General's beliefs and actions were the yardstick against which all Gaullist political ideas and the Gaullist political movement had to be measured. I felt that too many writers were excessively fascinated by the personality of the General and had little patience with, or interest in, those around him. Yet it was their hard work and persuasiveness which, to my mind, had surely been at least an equally vital force in enabling the Gaullist movement to become a successful political party and enabling it to acquire a durability that could survive the death of its eponymous founder. While it is true that an awareness of de Gaulle's very particular style and the social and historical background influencing his career is vital if one is to understand the initial emergence of Gaullism in the 1940s, during the 1960s his importance to the political practice of Gaullism - Gaullism as government and as a political party supporting that government - seemed to me gradually to diminish. I felt that the time was surely right to shift the focus of attention from de Gaulle to the Gaullists and their movement in order to achieve a more complete view of what Jean Charlot famously referred to as "the Gaullist phenomenon".

The second main assumption which I sought to question was related to the first. For the fascination with the personality of General de Gaulle had led to an underestimation of his colleagues and supporters within the Gaullist movement. This was an underestimation which led many to conclude that these people had

not made any significant impact, save their organisational skills, and had had little to contribute to Gaullism. I instinctively felt that this could not be true and was determined to test the opposite hypothesis: that the Gaullists, far from being unthinking subordinates who were content to adhere to the political objectives defined by de Gaulle, were a dynamic and diverse group who were constantly discussing Gaullism and the Gaullist party and were determined to make a contribution to the governing process whenever they could.

Justifying this point of view proved to be a difficult task. However much I sought to prove that Gaullists really were dynamic politicians who rejuvenated the centre-right of French political culture after the stale continuities of the Fourth Republic, time and again I was betrayed by lack of evidence. And yet when I came to write up my findings I was still convinced I had chosen the right approach in seeking to question the prevailing view I had encountered and suggest an alternative. Although this thesis does not constitute a fundamental revision of existing interpretations of the activities of the Gaullists, it still hopes that it has proposed some alternative views which may prove fruitful in future research.

The thesis is perhaps best explained as an exercise in mapping. It seeks to describe and assess the pressures, both personal and political, which shaped the Gaullist movement from its amorphous origins in 1958 to the formal political party which existed a decade later. These pressures are considered in the light of several different contexts; that of government, party, parliament and locality. Each level brings its own perspective on the contours of the Gaullist movement during the 1960s. After an introductory chapter which considers the historiography of Gaullism, the thesis proceeds

to examine the activities of Gaullist government ministers, of the national party leadership, of the deputies and of local party officials.

The second chapter examines the way in which government was conducted by Gaullists. Gaullist ministers have hitherto been depicted very much as Presidential subordinates. This interpretation has, however, often been based on a few unreliable accounts of the manner in which cabinet meetings were conducted, most notably that of Jacques Soustelle, a prominent Gaullist politician who was expelled from the movement for attempting to prevent de Gaulle from granting independence to Algeria. A more detailed examination of the governmental process reveals that at many significant stages of the drafting of policy, matters were a good deal more complex. Ministers, especially the Prime Minister, and their departments could intervene in important ways. Recently published memoirs reveal the gradually increasing role of individual ministers such as Georges Pompidou and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in leading ministerial discussion of policy and taking control of administration. While it would be an exaggeration to speak of ministers assuming absolute independence in their conduct of their departments, it is certainly fair to say that government in the Fifth Republic became a complex and multi-faceted process which cannot be explained away by polemical accounts of cabinet meetings. As the structures of the Fifth Republic matured, they gradually circumscribed the General's room for manoeuvre. This ensured that he was never able to exercise power in the almost dictatorial manner decried by contemporary opposition parties, nor in the authoritarian manner criticised by many subsequent commentators.

In the third chapter, the thesis uses internal party newsletters and reports of party activities to show how the Gaullist party could attempt to influence Gaullist policy by expressing the concerns of the rank and file without publicly opposing the General. Most noticeably, successive general secretaries of the party devoted considerable effort to articulating a Gaullist “style of government” which was based on modernisation, a theme independent of the personality of the General, with a view to ensuring the survival of Gaullism after his eventual departure from office. This style was not one to which all members of the movement felt they could adhere - indeed many Gaullist deputies saw it as their mission, during parliamentary debates on education and agriculture, to hold back modernisation, or at least the version of it defined by the Gaullist government of the time. All of which serves to underline the complexity of the Gaullist movement and the ideas which inspired it.

Equally important in giving Gaullism its unique character were those who represented it in the National Assembly, the Gaullist deputies. The complexity of some of their professional backgrounds and activities during the 1960s is considered in chapter four. Far from being the passive “godillots” (foot soldiers) satirised by the journalists of *Le canard enchaîné*, Gaullist deputies did attempt to fulfil their parliamentary role as best they could, given the reduced role the Assembly was forced to assume by the new constitution of the Fifth Republic. There were many ways in which they sought to exercise influence; informally through personal contacts or more formally through parliamentary committees, through specialised study groups (the party's own committees, membership of which eventually became compulsory for deputies),

or by expressing criticism in the National Assembly. Although their interventions rarely led to fundamental alterations in policy, genuine attempts were made to modify certain measures.

In the fifth chapter, the thesis assesses the role of the local party federations. In the past these have been presented as largely inactive or disorganised associations which achieved little beyond the dissemination of official party propaganda. In part this reflected the desire of the Gaullist party leadership to create a different kind of political organisation, led from the centre, in which local personalities such as deputies no longer had a privileged intermediary role. However, detailed examination of local party newsletters reveals that this ambition was not fulfilled.

Parliamentary deputies retained their position as important vehicles for the expression of local grievances and demands for redress – rather like the *notables* of traditional provincial French political culture. The chapter considers the problem Gaullism faced of identifying itself primarily as a force strengthening national unity and yet at the same time facing strong pressures from within for policies which provided special treatment for certain regions.

The conclusions can be drawn at this moment are tentative ones. At this stage of research into a period as recent as the 1960s, they cannot indeed be anything but tentative. The main conclusion to be drawn is that there was a great deal more to Gaullism than de Gaulle. This has been pointed out before, but its implications have perhaps not been fully explored. Previous scholars such as Jean Charlot and Jean Touchard have drawn attention to the 'different kinds' of Gaullism which existed during de Gaulle's tenure of the presidential office between 1958 and 1969. Touchard defined the different kinds of Gaullism as the Gaullism of General de Gaulle,

the Gaullism of the major Gaullist personalities such as André Malraux, François Mauriac, Michel Debré and Georges Pompidou, the Gaullism of the Gaullist political organisations and the Gaullism of the nation¹.

If this thesis were to be defined with reference to such terms, it would have to be described as a mapping of the first three kinds of Gaullism, that of de Gaulle, the leading Gaullist personalities and that of the Gaullist political parties during the 1960s. However the thesis seeks to examine these three categories as interrelated phenomena, and not to split them off into self-contained units. While Touchard's argument draws attention to the variety within Gaullism, it does not allow sufficient flexibility for the diversity and complexity of Gaullist ideas or for that of the Gaullist movement. The plurality of contexts in which Gaullism operated makes a stable definition even of its sub-currents unreliable. It is more accurate, and ultimately rewarding, to examine the political contexts which produced different views of Gaullism, without trying to pin them down to a precise formula.

In sum, this thesis aims to be one of the first self-consciously historical attempts to interpret Gaullism during the 1960s in France. A precedent for this approach can be found in the work of Philippe Mioche, who has recently sought to provide a more historical account of the life of Jean Monnet². Another, perhaps apposite, parallel is with the way in which recent historical work on the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1950s and 1960s has led to a much more sophisticated understanding of the social and political

¹ J. Touchard, *Le gaullisme*, Paris 1978, pp. 354-356.

² P. Mioche, *La genèse du plan Monnet*, Paris 1998.

dynamics of that era, and a consequent decentring of Adenauer from the historical narrative.

So far, much historical work on 1960s France has been included within general histories of the country during the twentieth century. As a result, examination of the decade has been confined to relatively short chapters in which the main concern of the analyst has been to relate the salient political events of the time³, often in order to place them in the context of more long-term trends in France's political development. Historians have thus been inevitably drawn to concentrate upon the events of May 1968, which do constitute the most dramatic occurrence of the period and which reveal a great deal about it. Yet in such accounts there is rarely time for a considered appraisal of Gaullism; a brief summary of de Gaulle's style of government is usually thought to suffice. This thesis is thus also an attempt to fill that gap. Not only does a self-consciously historical approach to this subject act as a useful corrective to its domination by political scientists, it also remedies a lacuna existing in works written by historians.

Undertaking an historical study of Gaullism, however, is a task fraught with difficulty. Primary sources were a particular problem. Much of the information in the public domain concerning the Gaullists in the 1960s is anecdotal or inconclusive. Beyond this, few further documents are available. In the face of these difficulties, I elected to concentrate instead on using existing primary sources to examine afresh the Gaullist movement and the ideas which inspired it. In so doing I seek to differentiate this work from the existing literature on Gaullism by drawing out its inner complexity. Too

³ See for example R. Gildea, *France since 1945*, Oxford 1996 or J. McMillan, *Twentieth Century France*, London 1992.

many writers have been content to use a few formulae – such as nationalism, Bonapartism or pragmatism - which best summarise what they see as the principal components of Gaullism. This thesis prefers to approach the phenomenon in a less ideological way and focus on the details of the period which make the movement more difficult to define. In so doing, it also inevitably seeks to draw attention away from de Gaulle.

Although locating original sources was a problem, I did find some material which had not been extensively consulted by previous commentators; most notably, local Gaullist newsletters, which can be found in the annexe of the *Bibliothèque Nationale* at Versailles. These were subjected to close examination during a yearlong stay in Paris. The results of this examination can be found in Chapter Five. For the most part, however, this thesis relies on revisiting and rethinking existing evidence rather than on revealing original source material. Such evidence was located primarily in the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, the *Institut d'études politiques* and the *Institut Charles de Gaulle*.

The aim of this thesis, then, is threefold. In the first place, it aims to draw attention away from General de Gaulle in the study of Gaullism. In so doing, it examines the activities and ideas of his supporters and thus in the second place explores the complexity of the Gaullist movement. Finally, it intends to lay claim to a degree of originality by adopting a self-consciously historical approach to these themes. Rather than defining Gaullism in terms of a few set concepts, it seeks to delineate its complex development in the context of the new, evolving French republic of the 1960s.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

SUMMARY

This chapter seeks to explain the thinking behind this thesis and outline the main ideas explored in the subsequent chapters. Its principal concern is to show how many assessments of Gaullism have not come to terms with its complexity, either as a political movement or as a set of political ideas. The reason for this shortcoming would seem to stem from two main factors. The first of these is the excessively narrow focus on the ideas and actions of General de Gaulle. Evidently if there is one key figure dominating the history of Gaullism, it is the General himself, but the fascination exerted by his intriguing personality has seemed to blot out the contributions of his supporters. This thesis hopes to correct this imbalance by concentrating instead upon the ideas and activities of the Gaullists and examining their contribution to what France's pre-eminent student of Gaullism, Jean Charlot, termed the Gaullist "phenomenon"¹. In so doing it plans to illustrate the complexity of Gaullism during the 1960s. Far from being a monolithic, authoritarian movement designed primarily to support de Gaulle and restore order in France, as much writing on the subject seems to suggest, Gaullism was a flexible phenomenon with at times conflicting priorities. Many Gaullists at all levels of the movement believed that they had a role to play in the new

¹ J. Charlot, *The Gaullist Phenomenon*, London 1971 (trans. Monica Charlot & Marianne Neighbour).

regime created in 1958. The way in which Gaullists at all levels of the movement conducted themselves, whether they were members of the government, deputies or local officials, also revealed a great deal about how they thought Gaullism should exercise power.

The other factor which seems to have hindered understanding of the complexity of Gaullism has been the institutional focus of much of the writing on France in the 1960s. Many studies devoted to this period have been written by political scientists whose main concern has been to assess the impact of Gaullism upon the political structure of France, particularly the change brought about by the new constitution of the Fifth Republic. Although such work has provided invaluable insight into Gaullist politics, it has often had the effect of reducing Gaullism to a few easily recognisable formulae, such as “nationalist”, “conservative” or “pragmatic”. This thesis elects to adopt a different approach, seeking less to define Gaullism than to examine how those involved in it behaved during the 1960s and what, if anything, their activities imply about what they thought Gaullism should be.

In so doing this thesis hopes to bring a relatively fresh perspective to Gaullism, and one which is less focused on institutional questions. It recognises that the vast range of existing literature on de Gaulle and Gaullism renders this a difficult task, but seeks to isolate some original elements not hitherto given the attention they deserve. It also hopes to remove the figure of de Gaulle from the centre of the stage, thereby highlighting other dimensions of Gaullism, hitherto obscured by the fascination exerted by the personality of the General.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW

The charismatic figure of de Gaulle

One reason for relative neglect of the complexity of Gaullism is a general preoccupation with images of the personality of de Gaulle. Many writings about the 1960s share the tendency to abstract the General from the rest of politics. This can take the form of an inordinate focussing on de Gaulle and the Presidency². This fascination tends to blot out the activities and beliefs of other Gaullists. The newcomer to Gaullism, consulting the general introductory works on the subject, is immediately directed towards the powerful personality of the President. This is in many ways inevitable - there could have been no Gaullism without de Gaulle - but it seems to impose unnecessary restrictions on our understanding of Gaullism.

Many assessments of Gaullism are in fact biographies of the General. According to Anthony Hartley, author of the only study of Gaullism in English, the "first task of a student of Gaullism" was to define de Gaulle's system of thought. His book consists primarily of an account of de Gaulle's military and political career from his beginnings as a soldier and then a teacher at the military college of Saint-Cyr through to its triumphant conclusion as the first President of the Fifth Republic during the 1960s. When referring to "Gaullism", it is clear that Hartley is thinking solely of de Gaulle's views. The General's writings, letters and speeches are his principal source³. Similarly, Jean Touchard's book on the

² J. Gaffney, *The French Left and the Fifth Republic*, London 1989, p. 3.

³ A. Hartley, *Gaullism: the rise and fall of a political movement*, London 1972, p. 1.

subject uses de Gaulle's published writings almost exclusively as its main source of information, thus revealing the author's view that for a definition of Gaullism one need look little further than the opinions of the General⁴. In the early 1960s, Touchard had already argued that there were only two sorts of Gaullism; the Gaullism of General de Gaulle and popular Gaullism, which meant, he argued, that in effect there was only one: the Gaullism of General de Gaulle, which had been hailed and supported by the plebiscite of the masses⁵.

This interpretation has been extremely influential. In his work published around the same time as that of Touchard, Jean-Christian Petitfils wrote that Gaullism consisted above all of the political thought of the General as expressed in his writings, speeches and official communiqués⁶. A further telling illustration of a tendency to focus on the former President of the Republic can be found in a later edition of the journal *L'Histoire* devoted to the 1960s. In the journal, a photograph of de Gaulle acclaimed by a crowd of people was accompanied by the following caption:

Serrer la main du grand homme! Dans ce geste, la nature du pouvoir gaulliste se manifeste à intervalle régulier: contact direct, sans intermédiaire, entre le Chef et son peuple; coïncidence de la souveraineté populaire et de la souveraineté royale; dévouement du héros et dévotion de la foule...⁷.

All such approaches seem to confirm a point made by Jean Charlot in the section of the bibliography of his study of the Gaullist party

⁴ J. Touchard, *Le gaullisme*, Paris 1978.

⁵ Unpublished lecture of 1963 cited in Charlot, *Gaullist Phenomenon*, pp. 13-14.

⁶ J.-C. Petitfils, *Le gaullisme*, Paris 1977, p. 6.

⁷ *L'Histoire*, July-August 1987, special edition "Les années de Gaulle, 1958-1974", p. 8.

dedicated to “Gaullism”: namely that the works mentioned there were more often devoted to General de Gaulle than to Gaullism and its successive political incarnations⁸. Yet he himself stated twenty-five years later that “Pour définir le 'gaullisme', autant partir de son inventeur, le général de Gaulle”⁹.

Certainly it is true that whatever the difficulties of interpreting the mature phenomenon of Gaullism as ‘charismatic’ in its essence, as based on the unique attraction of an individual rather than a party or a programme, the power of de Gaulle's personal appeal is critical to understanding its genesis¹⁰. For it was as an appeal to history that Gaullism presented itself to French voters of the period. Not as an appeal to the more general history of France, as the republicanism of the previous century or the monarchism of the twentieth-century tried to portray themselves, but specifically to the personal history of General de Gaulle, the most trustworthy player in the drama of France since 1940. This meant, significantly, that Gaullism was not obliged to define itself with respect to those political traditions such as Orleanism, Bonapartism, Royalism, or Boulangism¹¹, with which it shared certain obvious features. France's recent past was often presented by Gaullist party propaganda as a tale with a simple moral; whenever feuding politicians have brought disaster to the country, General de Gaulle has been called upon to save the nation. He was an heroic figure who could always be trusted to take care of the national destiny. Much of the UNR's appeal in the 1960s was

⁸ J. Charlot, *L'UNR: Etude du pouvoir au sein d'un parti politique*, Paris 1967, p. 312.

⁹ J. Charlot, “Le gaullisme”, in J-F. Sirinelli (ed.), *Histoire des droites en France*, Vol. 1, Paris 1992, p. 654.

¹⁰ A. Knapp, *Gaullism since de Gaulle*, Dartmouth 1994, p. 2.

¹¹ Gaullism has been subject to detailed comparison to these manifestations of the French Right in R. Rémond, *Les droites en France*, Paris 1982.

based on such propaganda; little surprise, then, that contemporary observers concluded that there was little more to Gaullism than de Gaulle. Yet it is the historian's task to look beyond the propaganda of election campaigns and examine the individuals and ideas which lay behind such propaganda. In so doing, one becomes aware of the full extent of the true diversity of Gaullism.

Political science and its priorities

Another reason for the author's dissatisfaction with writing on Gaullism is the order of priorities of those who have written about French politics during the 1960s. Current writing on Gaullism during the sixties is rich in detail and interpretation. Yet often, paradoxically, it is treated as a phenomenon of little substance. This is mainly because it is not generally seen as a coherent set of ideas. Gaullist policy during the 1960s has often been presented not as the practical realisation of a particular world view, but as a highly developed form of pragmatic political action. Stanley Hoffmann expressed this opinion most clearly in his essay on de Gaulle first published in the American review *Daedalus* in 1968. Complaining of the "ideological emptiness" of Gaullism, he argued that it was a style rather than a doctrine, and an attitude rather than a coherent set of dogmas. Furthermore it was a style without much substance, consisting only of the service of France and French *grandeur*, itself never defined in content, only by context¹².

The influence exerted by this view over subsequent writers on Gaullism has been considerable. Dorothy Pickles, for example,

¹² S. Hoffmann, *Decline or Renewal? France since the 1930s*, New York 1974, p. 217.

in her book on the Fifth Republic published a few years later, argued that “In reality, of course, Gaullism was not, and has never been, concerned with ideological principles”¹³. Historians who have begun to tackle the ideas and practice of Gaullism have been inclined to accept the assessment of previous analysts of the phenomenon. Hoffmann's view was explicitly endorsed as recently as 1992 by James McMillan in his history of twentieth-century France¹⁴, while Serge Bernstein has claimed that Gaullism was “purely pragmatic, based on *realpolitik*, and on a readiness to adapt to circumstances”¹⁵.

Such conclusions are more a reflection of the particular focus of many political scientists rather than a complete portrayal of Gaullism as a whole. Commentators such as Hoffmann and Pickles, although their range is vast and their understanding profound, have often been writing primarily of the impact of the Gaullist system upon the institutional evolution of the French Republic. Historians, however, do not always share their sense of priorities. As Robert Gildea has pointed out, political scientists have achieved much to deepen our understanding of politics by moving their studies beyond individuals to parties, associations, elections, the media and public opinion, and to issues of competition for power, the negotiation of claims, and decision-making. Yet in so doing they have developed a tendency to focus on institutions and information that can be easily quantified, such

¹³ D. Pickles, *The Government and Politics of France*, Vol. 1, London 1972, p. 214.

¹⁴ J. F. McMillan, *Twentieth Century France*, London 1992, p. 164.

¹⁵ Serge Bernstein, “De Gaulle and Gaullism in the Fifth Republic” , in Hugh Gough & John Horne (ed.), *De Gaulle and Twentieth Century France*, London 1994, p. 113.

as election results and opinion polls¹⁶. Such an approach often obscures the ever-changing complexities of the political process.

There are a great number of works similar to those of Hoffmann and Pickles, which seek to examine Gaullism primarily within an institutional context, focusing on its implications for the French constitution and polity¹⁷. In 1970 Jean Charlot defined Gaullism as first and foremost the means by which French democracy structurally evolved from a multiparty system to a dominant-party system on the British model¹⁸, conclusions which have been broadly accepted and reinforced by other analysts such as Vincent Wright and Anne Stevens¹⁹. John Frears described the “Gaullist phenomenon” as the growth of a large, disciplined and pragmatic party, which came into existence to give organised support to the actions of General de Gaulle, and which saw its role as making possible a coherent parliamentary majority system in a country with a long tradition of loose and unstable multi-party coalitions²⁰.

In these technical accounts of French politics Gaullism figures primarily as a federator of almost all the electors of the centre and right, a creator of majority government and the majority habit, and as an incentive to its opponents to unite. The complexity of the Gaullist movement, the diversity of the ideas that inspired it and of the kinds of people involved in it, is not their primary concern. This has led to Gaullism being reduced to

¹⁶ R. Gildea, *The Past In French History*, London and New Haven 1994, p. 9.

¹⁷ M. Larkin, *France since the Popular Front, Government and People 1936-1986*, Oxford 1988, preface, p. vi.

¹⁸ Charlot, *Gaullist Phenomenon*, p. 40.

¹⁹ V. Wright, *The Government and Politics of France*, London 1989, p. 191; A. Stevens, *The Government and Politics of France*, London 1992, p. 226.

²⁰ J. Frears, *Political Parties and Elections in the French Fifth Republic*, London 1977, p. 20.

an oversimplified formula to suit other arguments about the nature of the French polity. In 1961, for example, Philip Williams and Martin Harrison dismissed it as nothing more than “a mildly reforming and managerial conservatism”²¹. Dorothy Pickles followed them in this view ten years later, describing the practical application of Gaullism as “moderate, cautious and practical conservative reformism”²². John Frears provided another example of this approach in 1977 when he argued that admiration for what the General stood for, his style, and the progress made by the country under his leadership were the basic components of Gaullism²³.

The approach adopted by such commentators is not invalid, but its priorities do not match those of this thesis. Although this work does draw heavily on the invaluable research which the writers cited have carried out, it hopes to achieve a different emphasis which devotes more attention to the complexity and variety of Gaullist politics and ideas. This ambition reflects the author's desire to adopt a self-consciously historical approach to the period, one which reflects the fact that a new generation of historians is emerging who did not live through the events described and are thus marked by them in a different way to previous writers. This will allow for a greater degree of freedom in future research.

History and its priorities

²¹ P. Williams and M. Harrison, *De Gaulle's Republic*, London 1961, p. 210.

²² Pickles, *Government and politics*, Vol. 1, p.229.

²³ Frears, *Political Parties*, p. 46.

As historians who did not live through the Second World War and are too young to remember the 1960s begin to tackle this period, new interpretations will begin to emerge. Many of those writers cited hitherto lived through the 1960s and possess particular perceptions of that decade. As historians born more recently begin to grapple with more recent times, however, they bring different priorities and perspectives. An historical approach, which is concerned with how movements and institutions are constructed, with the change and developments involved, rather than with the finished artefact such as constitutions of regimes or of political parties, inevitably generates an alternative emphasis. Such a method is more concerned to examine events in detail rather than to provide an overall definition of a period. This thesis hopes to illustrate these points. It focuses on the changes within and development of Gaullism during the 1960s, and detailed examination of neglected material such as the speeches of deputies and local journals, rather than on election results, constitutions and referendum campaigns. In so doing it might not answer the question of what Gaullism is, but it hopes at least to do justice to its complexity.

An important recent work in this respect is that of Serge Bernstein. His is the first detailed attempt by an historian to construct a comprehensive overview of France in the 1960s. Much of the work is concerned to convey a clear picture of the main events of the decade. It contains a great deal of exposition as well as analysis. Yet in tackling the 1960s Bernstein is deliberately moving into territory unfamiliar to historians, arguing that historical interpretation of recent periods is essential. Historians cannot, as he points out,

“se vouer exclusivement au culte d'un passé lointain, alors que sociologues, politologues, économistes... laboureraient le champ de l'immédiat”²⁴.

He also adds that amidst the plethora of information available about recent periods, the important task for the historian is not to discover new sources but to pick out those sources which are most important. This thesis was in large measure inspired by this approach; a desire to enter terrain previously held hostage by sociologists, political scientists and economists, and a concern to make original use of existing sources rather than discover new ones.

Berstein's commentary on the 1960s is telling. He points out that during the decade legends surrounding de Gaulle sprang up which have been extremely influential on the opinions of the French and on the works of commentators. His point is worth quoting at length, since it resumes many of the concerns which gave rise to this thesis:

“... avec le temps s'est tissée une légende dorée dont les fidèles du Général ont été les initiateurs, mais qui s'est peu ou prou imposée à la conscience collective des Français et qui est aujourd'hui quasi unanimement admise: celle de l'homme exceptionnel qui, après avoir sauvé la France du déshonneur en 1940, l'avoir libérée en 1944, a su la redresser après les errements d'une IV^e République dont il avait dénoncé les tares, lui a donné des institutions stables, une place essentielle dans le monde, la prospérité économique, le progrès social... Image qui, si l'on accepte de gommer quelques aspérités qui défigurent ce tableau trop lisse, est

²⁴ Bernstein, *La république gaullienne*, p. 7.

bien, avec le recul, celle de la France des années soixante..."²⁵.

Much of the existing literature on Gaullism seems to provide such a picture, a "tableau trop lisse". This thesis prefers to focus on the factors which complicated this picture.

The need for exposition of the main events of the decade has so far led many historians away from detailed study of Gaullism. Most are content to accept the interpretations of their predecessors and define Gaullism as a relatively unimaginative form of conservatism. This fits neatly as part of the explanation for what was undoubtedly the most dramatic incident of the decade, the crisis of May 1968. Analysis of the events of this month takes up one fifth of Maurice Agulhon's chapter on the period in his recent book²⁶ and a considerable proportion of the chapter on the first decade of the Fifth Republic in Maurice Larkin's history of twentieth-century France²⁷.

So although a new generation of historians is appearing which can bring a new perspective to the 1960s, there is little sign so far of the emergence of any such perspective. With time, however, the study of Gaullism should escape from the constraints imposed by the fascination exerted by the personality of de Gaulle, by the language of political science and by the structure of historical exposition. This thesis hopes to provide a beginning for this escape. Before attempting such a feat, however, it must show how current views on Gaullism came about.

²⁵ S. Bernstein, *La république gaullienne*, p. 345.

²⁶ M. Agulhon, *The French Republic 1879-1992*, Oxford (trans. Antonia Nevill) 1993.

²⁷ Larkin, *France since the Popular Front*.

GAULLISM AND CONTEMPORARIES

The author does not wish to suggest that the opinions of those who have already tackled Gaullism are somehow erroneous or devoid of value. They have made extensive use of both primary and secondary sources. Yet the published opinions of contemporaries, both Gaullists and non-Gaullists, have perhaps been too influential on the conclusions of later writers on Gaullism. The following examples provide a flavour of the climate of political debate which surrounded the regime in the 1960s and to a significant extent set the parameters of subsequent debate.

The durability of Gaullism both as an approach to government and as a political party was much discussed during the 1960s. Contemporaries frequently asked themselves whether Gaullism was a unique phenomenon caused by the exceptional personality of an exceptional man or whether it was a set of ideas which sought to answer fundamental questions about France and which would survive the General in some form²⁸. Many concluded that it was the former, a temporary development dominated by de Gaulle, and denounced it accordingly. One journalist, writing in the Communist periodical *Capital*, felt that “le gaullisme, c'est de Gaulle et sa légende”²⁹. Another argued that Gaullism, beyond the personality of the General, was no more than “une boutique d'illusions, au mieux un livre de cuisine”³⁰. This attitude was not confined to the opponents of de Gaulle and of Gaullism. Gilles Martenot, in an article on “Gaullism” for *Le courrier du parlement*, pointed out that both Gaullists and anti-Gaullists had a tendency

²⁸ Touchard, *Le gaullisme*, p. 9.

²⁹ “Clarus” in *Capital*, 28 April 1964.

³⁰ P. Viannay in *Combat*, 11 September 1968.

to consider the General's name and the adjective "Gaullist" as interchangeable terms: "ni d'un côté ni de l'autre on n'échappe à ce mouvement qui consiste à identifier l'homme au phénomène"³¹.

One more sympathetic writer argued that the history of de Gaulle's actions was the basis for Gaullism, and added that there was no such thing as a Gaullist dogma: "Il y a simplement quelques grands impératifs, un sens donné à l'action"³².

Similar themes were repeated by contemporary opposition parties and politicians. For them, the nature of the relationship between de Gaulle and Gaullism meant that neither Gaullism nor the constitution it had inspired could survive the eventual disappearance of de Gaulle. The bulletin of the *Parti socialiste unifié* (PSU) claimed that "La Ve République repose sur l'attachement systématique des foules à un homme"³³. Jean Lecanuet, one of those who stood against de Gaulle in the 1965 presidential elections, argued at the 1964 Le Touquet conference of the *Mouvement Républicain Populaire* (MRP) that "Le gaullisme est un régime d'exception lié à l'existence d'un homme, il n'a pas d'avenir: la pyramide continue de reposer sur la pointe"³⁴. All such critiques sought to show that Gaullism, and thus in consequence the regime it created, was fundamentally unstable and ephemeral as it was linked to the destiny of one man. But, though the opponents of de Gaulle successfully predicted the eventual decline of Gaullian Gaullism, that is, of the idea of national unity inspired by the person of the General, they became so hypnotised by this aspect of the phenomenon that they did not

³¹ *Le courrier du Parlement*, 20-26 March 1964.

³² André Weil-Curiel, *Le Monde*, 21 July 1966.

³³ *Tribune socialiste*, 19 January 1967.

³⁴ *Le Monde*, 17 October 1964.

perceive the parallel increase in another type of Gaullism, that of the Gaullist party³⁵. It was the ideas and structures of Gaullism elaborated by the Gaullist party, as illustrated in chapter three, that was to come into its own after the departure of de Gaulle.

At the time, the self-consciously non-ideological character of much of the discourse of the Gaullist leadership seemed to represent a radical departure from French political tradition. Yet now, from the start of a new century, the modernising doctrine espoused by many party leaders seems to be very clearly an ideology, and one of a particular moment; roughly between 1958 and 1968 in Western Europe and the USA. During that period many political parties adopted the language of dynamic, successful economic management; the German SPD of the 1960s, Harold Wilson in the UK and President Kennedy in the USA all put forward arguments that would not have sounded out of place if uttered by a Gaullist. Kennedy in particular was keen to stress the technical nature of contemporary government, arguing in a speech to the White House Conference on National Economic Issues in 1962 that

“The fact of the matter is that most of the problems, or at least many of them, that we now face are technical problems, are administrative problems. They are very sophisticated judgments which do not lend themselves to the great sort of 'passionate movements' which have stirred this country so often in the past”³⁶.

³⁵ Charlot, *Gaullist phenomenon*, pp. 37-8.

³⁶ B. Miroff, *Pragmatic Illusions: The Presidential Politics of John F. Kennedy*, New York 1976, pp. 26-7.

Gaullism was thus not unique in its promotion of pragmatic technocracy. Indeed its espousal of this cause appears to be almost the archetypal manifestation of a much wider European and American political trend.

This was not a vision adopted by all Gaullists, however. The 'anti-ideology' perception of the movement proved extremely resilient. In February 1964, the journal of the UDT, *Notre République*, asked a number of prominent personalities, both Gaullists and non-Gaullists, what they thought Gaullism was. The answers they received were immensely revealing. Few felt that Gaullism could be classified as a meaningful set of guiding principles. One Jean d'Ormesson argued that Gaullism was primarily a style, a distinctive approach to the political process. In his view, it was the most striking illustration available of the argument that the key to possessing power was convincing others that one possessed it. In politics, he claimed, appearances are virtually everything, and Gaullism had given itself the appearance of effectiveness and efficiency. It was neither right nor left: the right disliked it because it valued and obtained popular support, the left because it felt itself to possess a form of legitimacy which transcended mere electoral results. This assertion was frequently made by Gaullists during the 1960s as part of a broader argument that Gaullism could not be categorised in terms of old-fashioned divisions of left and right, since it represented a new and radical synthesis which went beyond such out-of-date, rigid categories. This was one expression of the doctrine of pragmatic technocracy mentioned earlier that will be tackled at greater length in chapter three.

In the same publication, Pierre Viansson-Ponté, a journalist for *Le Monde*, refused to accept that the Gaullist movement represented any particular values. He preferred to describe it as the “lived experience” of de Gaulle, of the associates who assisted him and of the crowds who accorded him the impression of popular legitimacy. Jean Cau's first reaction was to affirm that Gaullism was not about political ideas, preferring to stress the radical new departure it represented in French political life. For him, Gaullism was the realisation of the necessity for profound changes in political practices, the survival of which would eventually bring about the collapse of public life and the establishment of dictatorship. This was a very precise definition which focused on one particular aspect of Gaullism. Others spoke in more general terms, such as Jean Dutourd, who illustrated the spiritual way in which many Gaullists defined their political allegiance by claiming that the most important components of Gaullism were honour, common sense and poetry. In his mind it also signalled a refusal of political humility, a position which had tempted the French people on so many occasions since 1925. One Jules Roy used similarly grandiose terms to define the Gaullist project, describing it as a refusal of defeat, the pride of battle and the subordination of national policy to the spiritual mission of France. Interestingly, he used this definition to condemn what Gaullism had become in the 1960s: France's insurance company, “embourgeoisifying”, enriching, dignifying and “fragrancing” the country, when it could have revolutionised the nation. François Mauriac summarised Gaullism succinctly as “efficiency”. Frédéric Grendel, a regular contributor to the Gaullist journal *La Nation*, stated that “Dans gaullisme, il y a Gaulle (Charles de). Le reste est

silence". This was perhaps the most striking claim made that Gaullism could only be explained in terms of the story of one remarkable personality³⁷.

While the variety of the answers the journal collected does provide some indication of the diversity of Gaullism, the common thread which unites the statements of those who had been asked for their views was a reluctance to speak of Gaullism as a clear set of political principles. For most of these interviewees, Gaullism meant either a few grandiose concepts which were difficult to identify with any particular policy, or the person of de Gaulle. This was typical of the way in which contemporaries interpreted Gaullism - a lead which has been frequently followed by political scientists and historians.

THE INTERNAL DYNAMICS OF GAULLISM

This thesis maintains that the domination of writing on Gaullism by an exclusive concern with de Gaulle as an individual is a result of the continuing fascination exerted by the General's personality, rather than an accurate reflection of the nature of the Gaullist phenomenon of the 1960s. While de Gaulle's personality and beliefs were undoubtedly essential to the invention and definition of Gaullism, they cannot alone provide a complete picture. Gaullism was a concern of many other people who did not share the same motives or understanding of Gaullist ideas. The subsequent four chapters intend to go some way towards redressing this balance and aim to reflect more faithfully the complex and flexible phenomenon of Gaullism which was hinted

³⁷ *Notre République*, 7 February 1964.

at by the variety of answers given by those interviewed by *Notre République*. The 1960s were to witness a variety of interpretations of Gaullism. The perspective which dominated many interpretations was that of “l’après-de Gaulle”. Most Gaullists were primarily concerned with what would happen after the General left office and spent much of the decade preparing for this eventuality. This had a significant bearing on the way in which many of them thought about Gaullism.

In making this case, this thesis aims to describe how political movements evolve as a result of the political context in which they operate. Its focus on the complexity of Gaullism is deliberate. Gaullism was not a fixed set of principles, established (by de Gaulle) during and after the Second World War and adhered to unwaveringly by a group of devoted acolytes. It was a volatile, emerging practice of government in which many felt that they had a personal stake and which they interpreted in their own varied ways. Gaullism during the 1960s never achieved any single or stable definition. It was no stranger to factional conflict. It was a broad movement in which contrasting viewpoints competed for supremacy. These were the internal dynamics which gave Gaullism its distinctive character during this decade.

Some commentators have begun to accept the need to look beyond de Gaulle for a more complete understanding of Gaullism. Douglas Johnson noted as early as 1965 that too often articles on, and assessments of, the General concentrated entirely on him, and lacked any sense of historical perspective, apart from ironic references to Joan of Arc or to Louis XIV³⁸. Sudhir Hazareesingh in

³⁸ D. Johnson, “The Political Principles of General de Gaulle”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 41 No. 4 (Oct. 1965), p. 650.

a recent work has pointed out that Gaullism cannot be reduced to the achievements of its founder³⁹. Even René Rémond, who, through his highly influential insistence that Gaullism essentially represented a modern form of Bonapartism, has encouraged commentators to focus almost exclusively on de Gaulle's ideas, accepted that

“La pensée profonde du général de Gaulle, qui n'est pas toujours aisée à saisir, n'est pas tout le gaullisme: le gaullisme, comme fait d'opinion, déborde largement son inspiration initiale”⁴⁰.

More recently, Jean-Paul Cointet has identified a tendency among historians towards a growing appreciation of a “Gaullist phenomenon” gradually escaping from the shadow of the individual who was its initial inspiration to lead a life of its own⁴¹. Jean-Christian Petitfils stressed that one of the most striking aspects of Gaullism was its multidimensional nature, which prevented it from being easily classified⁴². This will be the subject of the next four chapters.

One must look beyond the man whom Charles Williams imposingly described as “the last great Frenchman”⁴³ and the institutions of the Fifth Republic to examine the importance of individual Gaullists, assessing their contribution to Gaullism and considering the implications of their views and actions. In this way a more complete view of this multi-faceted movement

³⁹ S. Hazareesingh, *Political Traditions in Modern France*, Oxford 1994, p. 263.

⁴⁰ Rémond, *Les droites*, p. 314.

⁴¹ Jean-Paul Cointet, “Le gaullisme”, in Jean-François Sirinelli (ed.), *Dictionnaire historique de la vie politique française*, Paris 1985, p. 433.

⁴² Petitfils, *Le gaullisme*, p. 4.

⁴³ C. Williams, *The Last Great Frenchman*, London 1993.

emerges. There was a significant degree of improvisation within the Gaullist movement during the 1960s. For de Gaulle, despite (or perhaps because of) the strength of vision that constituted so powerful a part of his influential personality, never produced a specific or coherent political statement⁴⁴. Ambiguity was a central and deliberate part of the General's strategy. It was up to his followers to decide what they believed and what this meant in terms of practical policy-making. All those involved in Gaullism, in particular the Gaullist party, had to find a way of translating this vision into a practical policy agenda. In so doing, inevitably, they contributed to the internal dynamics of Gaullism.

⁴⁴ Stevens, *Government and politics*, p. 206.

CHAPTER TWO

GAULLISM AND GOVERNMENT

SUMMARY

This chapter consists of two principal sections. It begins by examining the constitutional ideas of de Gaulle and those of some individual Gaullists, and considers what they reveal about the overall complexity of Gaullism. This first section argues that while de Gaulle himself was undoubtedly the primary influence behind the Gaullist philosophy of government, other Gaullists, such as Michel Debré and Achille Peretti, also had ideas on the subject. In this way the chapter seeks to stress that there did exist differences of emphasis within Gaullist constitutional thought. These differences began to generate tensions once the Gaullists assumed power in 1959. There was more to Gaullist ideas on government than the public statements of de Gaulle.

Having assessed the implications of Gaullist ideas for the government of France, this chapter then assesses in a second section the practice of Gaullist government during the 1960s. The chapter asks whether Gaullist promises made with regard to the government of France were in fact respected. In so doing, it attempts to modify the impression given by much of the secondary literature on the government of the Fifth Republic. Often this seems to suggest that Gaullist government veered dangerously close to authoritarian rule by de Gaulle. While it is true that de Gaulle used an authoritarian style, this did not mean that he was a new kind of dictator, contrary to the polemical

claims of some of his more vociferous opponents. There was more to Gaullist government than the posturing of a unique individual. Government during the first ten years of the Fifth Republic should rather be understood as a new way of configuring political power, which fits very well into the general shift in the 1960s towards decentring parliaments, more complex corporatist structures and reinforced centralised state structures. A similar development can be observed in the USA where John F. Kennedy was seeking to make government into a science of efficient management directed by a few expert administrators¹. In addition, regimes led by different political parties were operating in a similar manner in the UK and West Germany². Many writers on the post-war period have drawn attention to the 1960s as a decisive turning point for European democracies, one historian describing this as the replacement of the activist and utopian mass politics of the inter-war years with “a more bloodless politics of consumption and management”³. The Gaullist practice of government was symptomatic of this trend. The contrasting labels of democrat and authoritarian, given to the General by his supporters and opponents, are therefore oversimplifications which do not do justice to the person or more especially the character of the period.

Although no serious analyst has ever accused de Gaulle of being worthy of direct comparison with the likes of Mussolini, fascination with the General as an individual has led interpretations of Gaullism as a system of government to focus on

¹ B. Miroff, *Pragmatic Illusions: the Presidential Politics of John F. Kennedy*, New York 1976, pp. 26-7.

² D. Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, London 1998 for the UK, A.J. Nicholls, *The Bonn Republic*, Newhaven 1998 for Germany.

³ M. Mazower, *Dark Continent*, London 1998, p. 306.

this question of de Gaulle's personal and constitutional authority. It is an approach that, although it covers many of the essential aspects of the period, does not fully reveal the evolving dynamics of Gaullist government. Policy and decision-making could be open to a wide range of influences. The fact that ultimately de Gaulle generally had the last word should not be allowed to obscure the efforts made by his supporters to make their own contributions to the government of France.

THE GAULLIST PHILOSOPHY OF GOVERNMENT

For de Gaulle and the Gaullists, recent French history had been characterised by catastrophe. Both in 1940 and in 1958, as well as in the numerous disasters of France's attempts to resist decolonisation, the country's political regime had shown itself to be incapable of providing the strong leadership necessary in times of crisis. Reforming this regime thus became the central priority of Gaullism. Articulating this reform of the system was initially the work of de Gaulle.

De Gaulle's Constitutional Thought

De Gaulle's constitutional thought has already been the subject of detailed analysis⁴, which has revealed that his ideas were determined by two main concerns. The first of these sprang from his profound convictions about the nature of the French people. Fragmented, resistant to change, hostile to political

⁴ Most works on the constitution of the Fifth Republic make extensive reference to de Gaulle's constitutional thought, as do biographies of the General. Also see J-L. Debré, *Les idées constitutionnelles du général de Gaulle*. Paris 1974.

command, he believed that the French were exceptionally difficult to govern. His Bayeux speech of 16 June 1946 stressed “notre vieille propension gauloise aux divisions et aux querelles”⁵. Effervescent and individualistic, in contrast to the regimented Germans or the socially virtuous British, they were irredeemably undisciplined, unceasingly eager to defy established authority. Despite this failing, however, they were capable of magnificent achievements. They thought and acted differently at different levels: they were quarrelsome and irreconcilable when their personal or group interests were engaged, but by heroic leadership they could be united and brought to demonstrate a coherent general will when the nation's future was at stake. It was de Gaulle’s aim to provide France with this strong leadership.

The second principal inspiration for de Gaulle's constitutional thought was his contempt for the postwar system of government. To his mind, the institutions provided by the French parliamentary tradition were incapable of providing the strong leadership which the country needed. It was de Gaulle who led the way in condemning this tradition. He issued striking and memorable denunciations of both the Third and Fourth Republic. In a declaration to the press on 27 August 1946, for example, de Gaulle highlighted the Third Republic's failure to adapt to the modern world: “Notre régime politique antérieur s'est effondré dans une épreuve qu'il n'avait pu ni prévenir, ni préparer, ni maîtriser”⁶. Far from carrying out the essential task of national defence which was the duty of the State, the regime had served only to exacerbate France's divisive tendencies. And to de Gaulle's

⁵ C. de Gaulle, *Discours et messages 2: Dans l'attente, 1946-58*, Paris 1970, p. 7.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 18.

disgust, the defeat of 1940 appeared to have taught the political classes nothing. They failed to see the need for strong, decisive leadership. The draft constitution presented to the second Constituent Assembly in the autumn of 1946 did not even mention the words “government” or “executive power”⁷. In his speeches during his time as president of the RPF, he regularly reiterated his view of France's problems. He attacked the Fourth Republic in almost every public statement, calling it “le régime qui a le recul pour loi et l'abandon pour destinée”⁸. Government could achieve nothing in a system run by politicians whose very purpose was to encourage disagreements and divisions⁹. “Les féodaux ne sont jamais favorables à un Etat qui fasse réellement son métier et qui, par conséquent, les domine”¹⁰. The use of the word “féodaux” is indicative of the kind of power he believed could be exercised by the political parties; they were as firmly entrenched in the structure of State power as medieval feudal lords and like them were able to hold the State to ransom.

His memoirs dealing with the time he spent as President of the Republic, the first volume of which was published in 1970, also devoted considerable space to criticising the regime of the Fourth Republic. He insisted that the true cause of France's political problems was the fact that government emanated from, and was not above, Parliament. The new constitution was presented as the only possible solution to the problem:

⁷ Declaration to the press of 27 August 1946 (*ibid.*, p. 20).

⁸ Speech to the meeting of the National Council of the RPF, 21 October 1950 (*ibid.*, p. 385).

⁹ Press conference of 24 April 1947 (*ibid.*, p. 56).

¹⁰ Press conference of 12 November 1947 (*ibid.*, p. 139).

“Faute de quoi, la multiplicité des tendances qui nous est propre, en raison de notre individualisme, de notre diversité, des ferments de divisions que nous ont laissés nos malheurs, réduirait l'Etat à n'être, une fois encore, qu'une scène pour la confrontation d'inconsistantes idéologies, de rivalités fragmentaires, de simulacres d'action intérieure et extérieure sans durée et sans portée”¹¹.

From Bayeux in 1946 to his last press conference of 1955, de Gaulle's resolve to bring in a new constitution if he returned to power was unrelenting. The brief phrases of his communiqué of 15 May 1958 found space to recall his insistence:

“Depuis douze ans, la France, aux prises avec des problèmes trop rudes pour le régime des partis, est engagée dans un processus désastreux.”

He repeated similar points just four days later:

“Le régime exclusif des partis n'a pas résolu, ne résout pas, ne résoudra pas, les énormes problèmes avec lesquels nous sommes confrontés.”

First among the dangers facing the country, with which de Gaulle opened his investiture speech on 1 June 1958, was “la dégradation de l'Etat qui va se précipitant”¹².

For the General and for the Gaullists constitutional reform was more than the observance of the tradition of consecrating - and consolidating - a change of regime. It was an attack on what he called “la cause profonde” of France's troubles.

¹¹ C. de Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir 1: Le renouveau, 1958-1962*, Paris 1970, p. 10.

¹² *L'Année politique*, 1958, pp. 534, 540.

“Cette cause - l'Assemblée le sait et la Nation en est convaincue - c'est la confusion et, par là même, l'impuissance des pouvoirs”¹³.

Without a transformation of the country's institutions de Gaulle's influence could be no more than a temporary palliative. The structure of the State was the foundation of all the nation's action:

“la nation française reflourira ou périra suivant que l'Etat aura ou n'aura pas assez de force, de constance, de prestige pour la conduire là où elle doit aller”¹⁴.

It was in this spirit that, speaking to the people of Algiers about the call for renovation, the General insisted that it must begin at the beginning, with institutional reform¹⁵.

Gaullists thus proposed a series of constitutional and political reforms which would serve to compensate for certain defects and inadequacies of political behaviour, themselves rooted in the nature of French history and society; the necessary corrective to the quarrelsome habits of a divided nation¹⁶. Yet not all Gaullists had the same view about the way in which these reforms should work, and did not favour them for the same reasons, as the examples of Michel Debré and Achille Peretti illustrate. Their suggestions are indicative of the broader diversity of Gaullism.

¹³ *ibid.* The “confusion of powers” instituted by the Fourth Republic was a frequent subject of de Gaulle's complaints: see for example the speech he made at Rennes, 27 July 1947 (de Gaulle, *Dans l'attente*, p. 103).

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 551.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 544.

¹⁶ Speech made at Bayeux, 16 June 1946 (*ibid.*, p. 8).

Michel Debré: "Le parlementarisme rationalisé"

One of de Gaulle's most long-standing, able and crucial supporters was Michel Debré. Not only was Debré an important lieutenant to the General during the Occupation and an administrator after the Liberation, he was a vocal supporter of his campaign against the French political establishment after his removal from power in 1946. Debré's journal, *Le courrier de la colère*, delivered condemnations of the politicians who ran the Fourth Republic, and of the system itself, on a weekly basis. At the same time, he used his place in the Senate to denounce the ineffectiveness of the current system of government. Debré's explanation of France's difficulties in achieving efficient government followed the same basic structure as de Gaulle's. The difference, as we shall see, lay in the role envisaged for Parliament by both men once these difficulties had been resolved. Yet like de Gaulle, Debré believed that France's instability derived from the political classes' taste for divisive factionalism. This was not a recent phenomenon, but one rooted in the nature of the French ruling classes. Debré made this argument in detail in his memoirs. Having examined the course of French history, he concluded that:

"toute notre Histoire apporte une leçon: les élites françaises ne sont pas favorables à l'Etat dès lors qu'il n'est pas à leur disposition. Un pouvoir qui se veut indépendant doit toujours s'appuyer sur un sentiment populaire et patriotique contre des corporations et des notables que guident le plus souvent les préoccupations personnelles... C'est un trait permanent de la France dont la grandeur et la force n'ont jamais reposé que sur des hommes seuls, soutenus par

quelques fidèles et, pendant de brèves périodes, par le peuple”¹⁷.

In Debré's interpretation, de Gaulle was one of these men destined to drag France to grandeur despite the contradictory impulses of the French people. In many ways he made the General sound like a modern incarnation of Richelieu, although he certainly felt no nostalgia for the *ancien régime*, as his defence of the role of Parliament will show. One good example of de Gaulle's ability to defeat such interest groups, putting the nation first, was his refusal to capitulate when faced by pressure from war veterans over the reduction of their pensions in 1963. Explaining this decision to Alain Peyrefitte, he was clear that the State could and should not be held to ransom: “Les anciens combattants se sont constitués en une féodalité devant laquelle l'Etat a pris l'habitude de plier, comme devant tous les autres. Eh bien, non!”¹⁸. In Debré's view, de Gaulle represented the alliance of authority and people “contre les grands.”

“De nos jours, ce sont les partis, les syndicats de toutes sortes, les groupes de pression, les puissances de l'information et quelques autres, qui sont les grands. Hier, ils regrettaient la féodalité. Aujourd'hui, ils regrettent le temps où le Parlement dit souverain était le lieu privilégié de leurs intrigues. Ils pouvaient alors plier le pouvoir à leurs aspirations. C'est contre ce comportement que je réagis”¹⁹.

¹⁷ M. Debré, *Mémoires 4: Gouverner autrement*, Paris 1994, pp. 39-40.

¹⁸ A. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, Paris 1994, p. 49.

¹⁹ M. Debré, *Mémoires 3: Gouverner*, Paris 1988, p. 36.

Again Debré uses historical comparisons, comparing the powerful interest groups of the 1960s with the nobles of the seventeenth century. Rather than desiring a return to the ancien regime, however, his point was that strong executive power was the only remedy to the difficulty of governing France. This attitude explained his loyalty to the General throughout his political career. Yet as we shall see, he was not against representative assemblies *per se*, but ineffective ones. He was to be a staunch defender of the Parliament of the Fifth Republic, which he saw as a much more efficient, modernised version of previous French assemblies.

Many have defined Debré's loyalty to the General in terms of personal emotional ties. Indeed his account of his first meeting with de Gaulle is an emotional one. Debré, like many members of the internal Resistance, did not meet the General until after the end of the war. Lack of personal contact had increased the mystique surrounding de Gaulle. Certainly for Debré his first meeting with this already legendary figure was an important experience:

“Les événements des années précédentes m'ont aguerri. Je ne manifeste aucune émotion apparente. Et pourtant mon coeur est touché jusqu'en son tréfonds. Je me trouve en face de l'homme qui a sauvé l'honneur de la France et incarné la Résistance à l'Allemand, à Vichy et à sa honte. Les Français et les Françaises lui doivent de retrouver leur dignité et leurs droits. Il est la revanche. Il est la liberté et l'unité de la Patrie. Ce rêve qui, si longtemps m'était apparu inaccessible, est maintenant la réalité. Une réalité plus belle que l'espérance. Derrière mon visage impassible les sentiments d'une immense joie et d'une grave fierté bouillonnent au fond de moi”.

It would be wrong to underestimate the importance of this meeting, though Debré had been involved with the Resistance for four years already: “Mon destin s'est donc scellé là”. De Gaulle, for him, was and would remain “le 'Symbole' de la République nouvelle... le destin l'a investi de la mission de gouverner la France”²⁰.

However, although Debré's view of de Gaulle as a man of destiny did imply strong personal ties, his prime concern was to re-establish the authority of the State. Excessive focus on the personalities of de Gaulle and his supporters can cause such issues to be overlooked. Public service was always the defining motive for Debré's political activities; his deep sense of loyalty to the State led to him being referred to as a “jacobin”. His admiration of Richelieu mentioned earlier did not spring from monarchist nostalgia but from respect for those who ensured the authority of the State was respected. From an early stage in his career, supporting de Gaulle seemed the best means of securing this authority. Since 1940, for many of Debré's generation, de Gaulle *was* France. He provided the principal inspiration to serve the country. A particularly revealing passage in Debré's memoirs clearly illustrates this point:

“A travers les hauts et les bas d'une période qui s'étend sur près de trente années, j'ai été loyal à sa personne, mais surtout... mon ambition a été d'être fidèle à la France éternelle, *telle qu'il en était l'expression en notre temps*”²¹.

²⁰ Debré, *Gouverner*, pp. 39-40.

²¹ M. Debré, *Mémoires I: Combattre*, Paris 1984, pp. 42-44. Italics added.

It was not the remarkable personality of de Gaulle which made him uniquely suited to rule France, but the fact that he was the most effective embodiment of the power of the State at that point in the country's turbulent history. Tellingly, a book which Debré published in 1963, very soon after he was replaced as Prime Minister by Georges Pompidou, was not entitled “Au service du Général de Gaulle”, or “Mon Général”, the titles of works published by Christian Fouchet and Olivier Guichard²² respectively about their experiences in politics. In contrast, Debré defined his career as being “Au service de la *nation*”²³. In Debré's mind, the person of de Gaulle was clearly separate from the French nation and more especially the French state. By supporting the former, his ultimate aim was to serve the latter.

Strengthening the State was not a simple matter of providing it with a strong leader. It also had to be run by competent, trained administrators. This was why Debré had created the *Ecole Nationale d'Administration (ENA)* in 1944, which rapidly became an institution which many aspiring politicians were obliged to attend if they were to be successful in their chosen career. Eight out of fourteen ministers in de Gaulle's first cabinet formed on 1 June 1958 were civil servants²⁴. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing was one of the earliest former students of the school to obtain national prominence as a government minister, beginning a professional pattern which was to become a significant characteristic of the

²² Paris 1971; Paris 1980.

²³ Paris 1963. Italics added.

²⁴ J.-L. Quermonne, *Le Gouvernement de la France sous la Ve République*, Paris 1980, p. 490.

Fifth Republic. On average, civil servants constituted 55 per cent of governments during the first 20 years of the new regime²⁵.

Furthermore, Debré's vision of the way in which the new regime should operate differed in significant ways from that of de Gaulle. His unquestionably strong support for the General should not be allowed to obscure this fact. Although they both agreed that restoration of the authority of the State was the most crucial reform which France needed in 1958, they did not have the same idea of the precise form this authority should take thereafter. Debré envisaged a much more active role for Parliament than de Gaulle did. France's problem had not been Parliament itself, but its inability to create a Parliament that would function effectively at the service of the State. The General, although undoubtedly a democrat and a Republican who accepted that Parliament was an essential part of the political process, was temperamentally highly unsuited to dealing with representative assemblies (as the comments quoted earlier in this chapter suggest). He felt that deputies produced factions capable only of partial, partisan views of the issues; the true concerns of the President, or so he claimed, were the interests of the nation as a whole. This is why he insisted that ultimate political authority should be invested in executive powers which remained above Parliament. The Assembly, by contrast, was the place where rival versions of the national interest competed for supremacy.

De Gaulle's perception of the role of the President also caused him to remain aloof from the day-to-day political disputes taking place in the National Assembly. One particularly revealing

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 265.

anecdote may be found in his memoirs. When he met Khrushchev, de Gaulle asked him how he found time to run the domestic affairs of the USSR when he appeared to spend most of his time travelling abroad, visiting other heads of State. Khrushchev replied that his presence was not required in Moscow to take care of daily problems: "Le Plan les a réglées d'avance"²⁶. De Gaulle felt that the President of the French Republic should enjoy the same privilege²⁷, remaining untroubled by internal disputes. Such a comment illustrates the General's desire not to involve himself in disputes between politicians.

Debré, by contrast, believed that Parliament should have a significant role to play and concerned himself deeply with parliamentary affairs. As his successor in the post of Prime Minister Georges Pompidou said, "il est parlementaire jusqu'au bout des ongles"²⁸. In Debré's speech to the Conseil d'Etat of 26 August 1958, which formed part of the process of drafting the new constitution, he made it clear that the main aim of the constitutional reform instituted by de Gaulle's government was not to introduce a presidential system, but to reinvigorate the parliamentary regime²⁹. In September of the same year he described the new regime as "un régime parlementaire classique assorti des règles nécessaires pour éviter les déviations vers le régime d'assemblée"³⁰. In a sense this sounded as if the Fifth Republic was merely an amended, improved version of the Fourth. De Gaulle would never have used such language. In the

²⁶ de Gaulle, *Le renouveau*, p. 246.

²⁷ Peyrefitte, *de Gaulle*, p. 528.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 103.

²⁹ J-L. Quermonne, *Le Gouvernement de la France sous la Ve République*, Paris 1980, p. 622.

³⁰ *Le Monde*, 5 September 1958.

debate on his government's declaration of policy in 1959, he spoke of the future relations between government and Parliament, arguing that the two should work together closely: “une nécessaire collaboration doit s'instaurer entre les deux institutions”³¹. Unlike de Gaulle, he was fully conscious of the role of the parliamentary majority in supporting the government's decisions and recognised that ministers had to work hard to retain the confidence of deputies. He envisaged an active role for the Gaullists, whom he considered to be the vital link between the legitimacy of the Head of State and that of Parliament: “je veux... qu'ils participent à l'effort national qui est, à mes yeux, la *récompense* des années de lutte et de combat que nous avons mené ensemble”³².

Debré, by using such language, made it clear that he respected his fellow Gaullists and was prepared, in theory at least, to concede an important role in the legislative process to them³³. De Gaulle, by contrast, felt under no obligation to “reward” those who supported him. His relationship with the older Gaullists was not a feudal one, whereby the price of loyalty was a series of special dispensations granted to a privileged few. His concern for the authority of the State prevented him from according any special privileges to any one political group. He felt that the Gaullists should accept the decisions he took in the name of France³⁴. Already, as leader of the RPF, de Gaulle had expressed his desire to maintain complete freedom of action, telling Louis Terrenoire that

³¹ Debré, *Gouverner*, p. 20.

³² *ibid.*, p. 31. Italics added.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 34.

³⁴ Peyrefitte, *de Gaulle*, p. 48.

“Je ne veux pas être ligoté. En 1946, j'ai refusé d'être ligoté par les partis, je ne veux pas l'être, aujourd'hui, par le Rassemblement. Les Capitants, les Astoux voudraient que je fasse ceci ou cela. Je ne veux pas...”³⁵.

De Gaulle felt that he could not be restricted by ties of gratitude or loyalty as this would compromise the integrity of his actions, which had to be undertaken, theoretically at least, on behalf of the entire nation, not just one political group within the nation. When in 1958 Alain Peyrefitte complained to René Brouillet, head of de Gaulle's private office, that as he had not been a member of the RPF he did not feel that he “belonged” to the Gaullist parliamentary group, Brouillet replied:

“ne le regrettez pas! On dirait que le Général veut effacer cette page de son passé. Il se méfie d'eux, parce qu'ils croient avoir des droits sur lui. Or, il estime qu'ils lui doivent tout, ce qui est probablement vrai, et qu'il ne leur doit rien, ce qui est peut-être inexact”.

The independence of state power was of paramount importance to de Gaulle. This was illustrated by his refusal to make the loyal René Ribière a secretary of State in 1962. “Je lui ai rendu trop de services”, said Ribière to explain why he had not been appointed³⁶. Nothing must compromise the authority of the President.

All this seems different to Debré's attitude. Ultimately it is tempting to conclude that this difference of approach was a significant factor behind de Gaulle's dismissal of Debré in 1962.

³⁵ L. Terrenoire, *De Gaulle 1947-1954: Pourquoi l'échec?* Paris 1982, pp. 234-5.

³⁶ Peyrefitte, *de Gaulle*, pp. 48, 95.

Many commentators do make this case³⁷. Given that after 1962 the regime could evolve without the restrictions imposed by the Algerian conflict, there was a real possibility that Debré would expect Parliament to assume a greater role than it had between 1959 and 1962. De Gaulle was not prepared to risk defeat at the hands of the same politicians who had brought about his resignation from the Presidency of the Provisional Government in 1946. The flexibility of the new constitution meant that those in office had to use all the power they had to ensure their interpretation of the text prevailed. De Gaulle's dismissal of Debré, who, for all his belief in the supremacy of the State, was a firm believer in Parliament's capacity to participate in that supremacy, was one step towards attempting to introduce a more strongly presidential system.

Achille Peretti: a presidential system

Debré was not the only Gaullist to have a different view of the new regime. Jacques Soustelle, whose experiences during the early years of the regime will be dealt with more fully later in the present chapter as well as in the subsequent one, attempted to establish a much more independent role for ministers. Achille Peretti, in contrast, wished to revise the constitution of the Fifth Republic formally in order to confirm its nature as a presidential regime. He tabled his suggestions in Parliament in March 1966. As mayor of Neuilly just outside Paris and sometime vice-president of the National Assembly (he occupied the post for most of 1964)³⁸,

³⁷ Such as D-C. Badache, "Les positions institutionnelles des gaullistes depuis 1959", *Revue française de science politique*, Vol. 34 No. 4-5 (Oct. 1984), p. 847.

³⁸ *Who's Who in France*, 1971-2, Paris 1972.

Peretti's ideas carried significant authority. In 1969 he became president of the Assembly when the incumbent Chaban-Delmas was appointed as the first Prime Minister of President Georges Pompidou.

The text proposed by Peretti foresaw a complete reorganisation of the executive; the post of Prime Minister was abolished, and that of Vice-President introduced. The Vice-President was to be elected at the same time as the President, as in the American system. This reform was designed to remove the problem, inherent in the Fifth Republic constitution, of the power vacuum if the President became ill or died. As things stood, it was unclear whether the Prime Minister should assume full responsibility, or whether supreme executive power passed to the president of the Senate. In Peretti's scheme, authority would pass directly to the Vice-President.

Many more features of the proposed reform recalled aspects of the American presidential model. The President would not be accountable to Parliament, and would regularly deliver messages on the state of the nation to the Assembly. A Supreme Court would take over the powers of the Constitutional Council and become the guardian of the constitution. The distinctiveness of the project lay in the role prescribed for referenda and in the Head of State's right to dissolve Parliament. A referendum could be introduced by the President either at his own discretion or when both Assemblies, meeting together and deciding with a majority of two-thirds, demanded one. In addition, the President would not be able to dissolve Parliament during the first year after its election, and when dissolution did take place, the President had to resign. Both powers would thus be obliged to face the electorate

simultaneously, which could only happen under the existing arrangements if the President decided to dissolve the Assembly and fight both legislative and presidential elections together.

The proposed reform was never debated in Parliament. Nor was an identical bill of October 1968³⁹. Yet such proposals kept dissatisfaction with the existing order alive and illustrated that although the Gaullists identified themselves strongly with the new institutions, some of them did not believe that they were the best possible solution. Their main virtue was to be different from those of the previous Republic.

The examples of Debré and Peretti serve to illustrate the differences of opinion between Gaullists on constitutional matters. Gaullist constitutional theory, a vital component of Gaullism, was not the preserve of de Gaulle alone. His supporters were also participants in the new system and some had their own ideas about how it should function. Some agreed with de Gaulle that the President should enjoy as much freedom of action as possible. Others, most notably, as we shall see later, the Gaullist members of Parliament, seemed like Debré to hope for a more active role for Parliament. These differences were subsequently translated into the domain of government, where not all ministers were prepared to accept the President's directives. Tensions over the direction taken by the new regime contributed to the diversity of Gaullism as a political phenomenon.

³⁹ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée nationale, premier session ordinaire de 1968-1969, document no. 337. This was identical in content to the 1966 project.

GAULLISTS IN GOVERNMENT, 1958-1969: INTERPRETATIONS

Beyond Gaullist theories of government lay the reality of how Gaullists actually exercised power during the first decade of the new regime. It was not a simple matter to apply the ideas which de Gaulle and to a lesser extent the Gaullists had elaborated during the preceding years. Complicated issues of personality, tradition and legality surfaced. This was especially true of the Gaullists who became ministers, many of whom had their own ideas about the way in which government should function and were keen to speak out in cabinet.

Since much writing on Gaullism has been strongly focused on establishing how powerful the President was and thus to what extent Gaullist government was dangerously authoritarian, this point has perhaps not received the attention which it deserves.

Shared assumptions?

Analysis of the secondary literature on the Gaullist system of government rapidly reveals several recurring themes. Firstly, there is an excessive focus on the key assumption that de Gaulle was able to exercise absolute control over the most important aspects of policy. This was guaranteed both by the support of the Gaullist movement, which aimed to restore the predominance of de Gaulle, and by the constitution of the Fifth Republic, which had been drafted with the General in mind. According to Samy Cohen, “nul, parmi les spécialistes, n'ignore où se situe le centre névralgique du

pouvoir: à l'Elysée..."⁴⁰. Hugues Portelli argued that between 1958 and 1969, "la prééminence du président ne sera jamais remise en cause"⁴¹. Outside France, these views have been endorsed by many other commentators. Dorothy Pickles is characteristic in her assertion that

"Throughout the Fifth Republic, the President, Prime Ministers, Gaullist and opposition Deputies, along with all political commentators of all political opinions, have been agreed that, whatever the Constitution may lay down, Government policy has been, in reality, determined by the President"⁴².

Writers on the Fifth Republic have been so eager to insist on the omnipotence of the President of the Fifth Republic that they have often risked neglect of other aspects of government.

Certainly, compared to the Fourth Republic, the power of the President was considerable. But it has commanded too much attention and generated the concomitant view that there was little collective life in the government. This is based on the somewhat simplistic notion that the increase in the power of the President took place at the expense of ministers. The dominance of de Gaulle's personality, now legally consecrated as the ultimate source of all authority by the constitution of the Fifth Republic, ensured that there was little opposition to his views in cabinet and policy debate was rare. After all, according to many writers, 1960s governments were made up of Gaullists who would not have

⁴⁰ S. Cohen, "L'immédiate primauté présidentielle," in Olivier Duhamel and Jean-Luc Parodi (eds.), *La constitution de la Cinquième République*, Paris 1985, p. 93.

⁴¹ H. Portelli, *La politique en France sous la V^e République*, Paris 1987, p. 35.

⁴² Pickles, *Government and Politics*, p. 131.

accepted office under anyone other than de Gaulle and who were all profoundly devoted to the person of the General. They could not be expected to take issue with the pronouncements of their master, regarded as divine scripture by these acolytes. While such language is exaggerated, it is an indication of the flavour of the attitude of many writers when discussing the apparent lack of debate in cabinet meetings. The assessment of Jean Lacouture is a good example of this attitude and his view of meetings of the *conseil des ministres* is worth quoting at length:

“Il en allait en somme de ces Conseils comme de la vie des jardins. Un arbre trop puissant fait ombrage, capte les effluves, épuise ses voisins. Comment, autour de Charles de Gaulle, *exister*? Sinon sous cette forme qu'a adoptée l'entourage, de communauté pieuse, de ruche voée à la gloire et l'efficacité d'un seul?... Qui osait 'plancher' devant ce personnage monumental?”⁴³.

The consequence of such views has been the belief that Gaullist ministers were unwilling to assume responsibility for anything other than trivial matters. For many specialists, such as Serge Bernstein, de Gaulle appeared to reduce the government's role to one of simply implementing his policies⁴⁴. The cabinet existed purely as a glorified administrative meeting, expected to deal only with processing day-to-day affairs. One analyst complained that “la discussion ne porte que sur les moyens et les circonstances”⁴⁵. Any attempt to discuss critically the basic

⁴³ J. Lacouture, *De Gaulle 3: Le souverain*, Paris 1986, pp. 23-4. See also S. Sur, *La vie politique en France sous la V^e République*, Paris 1987, p. 95.

⁴⁴ Bernstein, “De Gaulle and Gaullism”, p. 112. See also S. Bernstein, *La France de l'expansion 1: La république gaullienne*, Paris 1989, p. 90.

⁴⁵ F. Bourricaud, *Esquisse d'une théorie de l'autorité*, Paris 1961, p. 324.

orientations of presidential policy in cabinet was regarded as an intolerable act of insubordination. Routine meetings were merely a matter of report, at which the President and the relevant minister would outline the decision that they had in effect already taken. On major issues, the President would invite each minister in turn to give his views; and then at the end, often without further discussion, the President would announce his decision⁴⁶. Vincent Wright, in a particularly good example of the scornful language used to describe Gaullist government, has described some of de Gaulle's ministers as "little toy soldiers"⁴⁷.

One explanation advanced for this situation, apart from the devotion of the Gaullists to their leader, was the colonisation of government by civil servants. It has been argued that de Gaulle was keen to use former civil servants as government ministers because he knew he could rely on them to do his bidding. They concentrated on producing elegant reports which tended to flatter their superior. Pleasing those in power, after the manner of a suitor at a royal court, was their main concern⁴⁸. The overall result of this was, according to one commentator, "l'alliance d'un arbitrage souverain et d'une gestion administrative dépolitisée"⁴⁹. This kind of comment summarises a widely-held view of the Gaullist practice of government. While it was true that more

⁴⁶ See for this view Quermonne, *Le gouvernement*, p. 211; P. Avril, *Le régime politique de la cinquième République*, Paris 1967, p. 243; William Andrews, "The Collective Political Executive under the Gaullists," in William Andrews and Stanley Hoffmann (eds.), *The Fifth Republic at Twenty*, New York 1981, p. 37; Hazareesingh, *Political Traditions*, p. 270; J. Jackson, *De Gaulle*, London 1990, p. 80; A. Shennan, *De Gaulle*, London 1993, pp. 134, 165; P. Williams, *Politics and Society in de Gaulle's Republic*, London 1971, p. 176; Larkin, *France since the Popular Front*, p. 283.

⁴⁷ Wright, *Government and Politics*, p. 92.

⁴⁸ F. Bloch-Lainé, *Profession: Fonctionnaire*, Paris 1976, p. 232.

⁴⁹ Avril, *Régime politique*, p. 243.

graduates of the *Ecole Normale d'Administration* (ENA) were members of government, this was not instituted by Gaullism but part of an internal trend which had its origins with the formation of ENA long before the Gaullists ever came to power.

Some felt that the Prime Minister had the potential to achieve a degree of relatively independent influence and power. Commentators have argued, however, that the Gaullist system of government could not allow this. Samy Cohen argued that as early as 1959 it was clear that “le Premier ministre ne sera pas un concurrent et encore moins un intrigant. Il sera un féal”⁵⁰. The polemical writer Jean-François Revel described the role of Prime Minister as 'fictional', since there was no way of differentiating the premier from the President⁵¹. Many others have followed their lead in asserting that the Prime Minister, whatever his potential official influence, remained a passive and impassive tool of the presidential will – particularly as de Gaulle wielded so much personal authority as well as constitutional power⁵². The most he could be said to be was a chief administrator, not a national political leader⁵³.

A large body of opinion thus asserts the supreme importance of presidential power, and the consequent inactivity of the Prime Minister and the rest of the government.

Was Gaullist rule authoritarian?

⁵⁰ Cohen, “L’immédiate primauté”, p. 93.

⁵¹ J-F. Revel, *L’absolutisme inefficace*, Paris 1992, title of chapter 3.

⁵² See for example J. Chapsal, *La vie politique sous la Ve République*, Paris 1987, p. 98; J. Hayward, *Governing France: The One and Indivisible Republic*, London 1983, p. 108; Shennan, *De Gaulle*, p. 105; Hazareesingh, *Political traditions*, p. 270.

⁵³ M. Prélôt, “Le régime reste parlementaire”, *Le Monde*, 31 July 1958.

Evidence concerning what actually happened during Gaullist cabinet meetings is rather thin on the ground. As a result, analysts of Gaullist government have tended to rely on a similar set of sources. First among these sources are de Gaulle's own comments on the art of government. They have frequently been used to prove the point that the General's authoritarian manner meant that he was not interested in listening to the opinions of others. His account of meetings of the provisional government between 1944 and 1946 is a good example of this kind of evidence. He wrote that "Souvent, il s'est établi entre les membres une sorte d'accord général. J'en prends acte et tout est dit. Sinon je formule la décision que je crois bonne; de ce fait elle est celle du Conseil"⁵⁴. This last sentence has been read as an admission that it was ultimately only de Gaulle's view that counted. Andrew Shennan has used it to support his argument that "Others gave advice, but he decided"⁵⁵. Yet one may wonder whether such a source is entirely reliable. It was inevitable that in his memoirs, de Gaulle should accord himself the predominant role in political events. Always keen to stress the need for decisive leadership, he chose to emphasise this quality when writing about his own role in public life. It would be legitimate to question, however, whether his version of events was in fact an accurate reflection of reality.

De Gaulle's comments about government during the 1940s should also perhaps not be used, as they have been done by some analysts⁵⁶, as evidence of a heavy-handed approach which

⁵⁴ C. de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre 3: Le salut, 1944-1946*, Paris 1959, p. 126.

⁵⁵ Shennan, *De Gaulle*, p. 132.

⁵⁶ François Goguel felt that this passage would also be a fair description of cabinet meetings between 1959 and 1962 (F. Goguel, *Cours donnés à L'Institut d'études politiques de Paris, 1961-*

extended to the 1960s, a period when there was a different constitution, different ministers, and an entirely different approach to government. But the General's own summary of the Fifth Republic period encouraged commentators in their belief that he kept tight control of everything that mattered. In the *Mémoires d'espoir* he asserted that Fifth Republic administrations were presidential administrations.

“Certes, il existe un gouvernement qui 'détermine la politique de la nation'⁵⁷ mais tout le monde sait et attend qu'il procède de mon choix et n'agisse que moyennant ma confiance”⁵⁸.

In addition, his definition of his responsibilities was an all-encompassing one:

“Si, dans le champ des affaires, il n'y a pas pour moi de domaine qui soit, ou négligé, ou réservé, je ne manque évidemment pas de me concentrer sur les questions qui revêtent de la plus grande importance générale”⁵⁹.

All of which seemed to confirm Pierre Viansson-Ponté's view, expressed in 1961, that there was nothing “reserved” about the “reserved domain” which had been defined by Gaullists to justify absolute presidential control in certain areas⁶⁰. His influence extended to all areas of policy. According to the General, ministers were responsible to him and him alone; he appeared to believe

1962, Paris, p. 267), while Pierre Avril held that it would be accurate for the whole of the 1960s (Avril, *Régime politique*, p. 242).

⁵⁷ Article 20 of the constitution.

⁵⁸ de Gaulle, *Le renouveau*, p. 284.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 286.

⁶⁰ “La tête et les jambes”, *Le Monde*, 7 November 1961. See also Chapsal, *La vie politique*, p. 99.

that their job was to carry out his policies and not respond to the wishes of the country⁶¹. This suggested that the cabinet had little freedom of action. The Gaullist party journal *La Nation* stated in 1967 that government should be “une équipe homogène de travail et de réalisation, chargée d'appliquer la politique définie par le chef de l'Etat”⁶², which did not seem to suggest that ministers were required to promote their own ideas.

Nor was the Prime Minister to be accorded an independent role. De Gaulle once referred to the President being “voué à ce qui est essentiel et permanent” while the Prime Minister is merely “aux prises avec les contingences”⁶³. He went on to say that

“Etant donné l'importance et l'ampleur des tâches du Premier ministre, il ne peut être que le 'mien'. Aussi l'est-il, choisi à dessein, maintenu longtemps en fonction, collaborant avec moi constamment et de très près...”⁶⁴.

This seemed to restrict severely the Premier's independence.

De Gaulle's comments on government have attracted a great deal of attention. Certainly they are revealing about his attitude towards effective administration. Yet focusing on the General's opinions has tended to obscure the complete picture of government during the 1960s. Another particularly important source which has encouraged analysts to interpret Gaullist government as quasi-authoritarian was the description of cabinet meetings given by Jacques Soustelle, Minister of Information from

⁶¹ De Gaulle, *Le salut*, p. 122.

⁶² *La Nation*, 12 April 1967.

⁶³ De Gaulle, *Le renouveau*, p. 288.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p. 284.

July to November 1958 and then Prime Minister's delegate with responsibility for the Sahara and Overseas Territories from 1959 to 1960. His account was published in 1962 and made a great impression with its scathing comments about Gaullist government. According to Soustelle, the most important issue of the legislature, Algeria, was only fully discussed by the *conseil* on one occasion, on 26 August 1959. Even then, he added, there was no real debate between opposing points of view: "Chacun ne parla qu'une fois, il n'y eut pas de discussion, mais une série d'interventions, d'où se dégagait une impression confuse"⁶⁵. He also complained about the Gaullist approach to foreign policy, claiming that the government was required only to listen to a prepared commentary read out by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Couve de Murville. Similarly, Pierre Guillaumat, Minister of Defence, only ever spoke of official appointments; ministers never had an opportunity to discuss military affairs or the government's attitude towards the armed forces⁶⁶.

Although de Gaulle wrote that "Chacun peut demander la parole. Elle est toujours donnée"⁶⁷, ministers were not expected to have an opinion on issues which did not concern them directly. The sacking of Antoine Pinay in 1960 was a result of his refusal to obey this unwritten rule. At the *conseil des ministres* of 8 November 1959, Finance Minister Pinay had criticised De Gaulle's attitude towards NATO. The General's reply, widely reported in later years and often cited as proof of his authoritarian methods, was as follows: "Monsieur le ministre des Finances s'intéresse aux

⁶⁵ J. Soustelle, *L'espérance trahie*, Paris 1962, p. 114.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 97, 98.

⁶⁷ De Gaulle, *Le renouveau*, p. 284.

problèmes de politique étrangère?"⁶⁸. In this context, the Finance Minister's role appeared to be purely that of a cashier, providing the required funding for the monarch's overseas adventures⁶⁹. In short, to use the words of Soustelle,

"il n'y eut pas de Gouvernement, mais, d'une part, des commis rivés à des tâches administratives et, d'autre part, à l'Elysée, le vrai pouvoir politique qui décidait souverainement de tout sans d'ailleurs sérieusement informer de rien"⁷⁰.

Soustelle's conclusions were damning and were used by contemporary journalists as evidence for their own views of the Gaullist regime. The articles of these journalists have also been important sources for subsequent writers on Gaullism. Pierre Viansson-Ponté reported a new minister in 1969 as saying that in meetings of the Council of Ministers presided over by General de Gaulle, the rule was that nobody spoke unless asked to, and nobody expressed an opinion opposed to that of the President⁷¹. Professor Georges Vedel, who became one of the most prominent critics of the constitution, complained in *L'Express* that "le gouvernement n'est plus qu'un organe de préparation et d'exécution des décisions du chef de l'Etat, de gestion des affaires courantes". The Head of State governed alone, he claimed, only tolerating the appearance of a government to ensure that democratic procedure seemed to be respected. The only ministers

⁶⁸ See Lacouture, *De Gaulle 3*, pp. 82-3, for an account of this meeting.

⁶⁹ J. Gicquel, *Essai sur la pratique de la Ve République*, Paris 1968, p. 201.

⁷⁰ Soustelle, *Espérance trahie*, p. 94.

⁷¹ *Le Monde*, 24 June 1969.

he would allow were his own personal collaborators⁷². *Le canard enchaîné* complained that “We have a shadow cabinet, just like the British - only ours is in office”⁷³ and depicted government as a collection of remote-controlled automatons, their controls manipulated from the Elysée by de Gaulle (see Fig. 1). The pages of the left-wing dailies regularly repeated their claim that de Gaulle was exercising “personal power” and leaving no scope for governmental initiative. An editorial in *Combat* in 1966 claimed that “On ne peut pas dialoguer avec de Gaulle, c'est-à-dire élaborer la politique avec lui sur un pied d'égalité... MM. Guy Mollet, Antoine Pinay, Pierre Pflimlin l'ont tenté. En vain”⁷⁴.

Many of those critical of the regime reserved their fire for the Prime Minister, whose position, combining as it did potential power and actual servility, seemed to exemplify all the problems with the Gaullist system of government. One Gaullist felt the Prime Minister was little more than “a sort of civil chief of staff”⁷⁵, while another likened the Premier to a whipping-boy, designed to spare his master, like the coachman of some eighteenth-century ambassador who had quarrelled with another dignitary⁷⁶. The Prime Minister would provide de Gaulle with a useful screen against both the trivia of day-to-day business and the

⁷² *L'Express*, 12 May 1960. See also Vedel's similar article in *Preuves*, January 1960.

⁷³ Cited in Williams and Harrison, *De Gaulle's Republic*, p. 229.

⁷⁴ *Combat*, 22 March 1966. Pinay's case is mentioned above; Pflimlin was forced to resign from Pompidou's cabinet in May 1962 after de Gaulle made critical remarks concerning European integration at a press conference while Guy Mollet resigned from de Gaulle's cabinet in 1958, claiming that no minister had been given adequate time or resources to properly examine proposed economic measures (see his letter of resignation to de Gaulle in *L'Année politique*, 1958, p. 566). See also H. Bordage, “Les ‘vertus’ du gaullisme”, *Libération*, 21 June 1962; M. Fourrier, “Union contre le gaullisme”, *Libération*, 28 May 1963; M. Valle, “Gaullisme et réaction”, *Combat*, 5 April 1965.

⁷⁵ René Capitant in *Notre République*, 10 May 1963.

⁷⁶ Léo Hamon in *Notre République*, 10 May 1963.

En marge de la Foire aux Jouets de Lyon : LE STAND DES AUTOMATES RADIO-GUIDES.

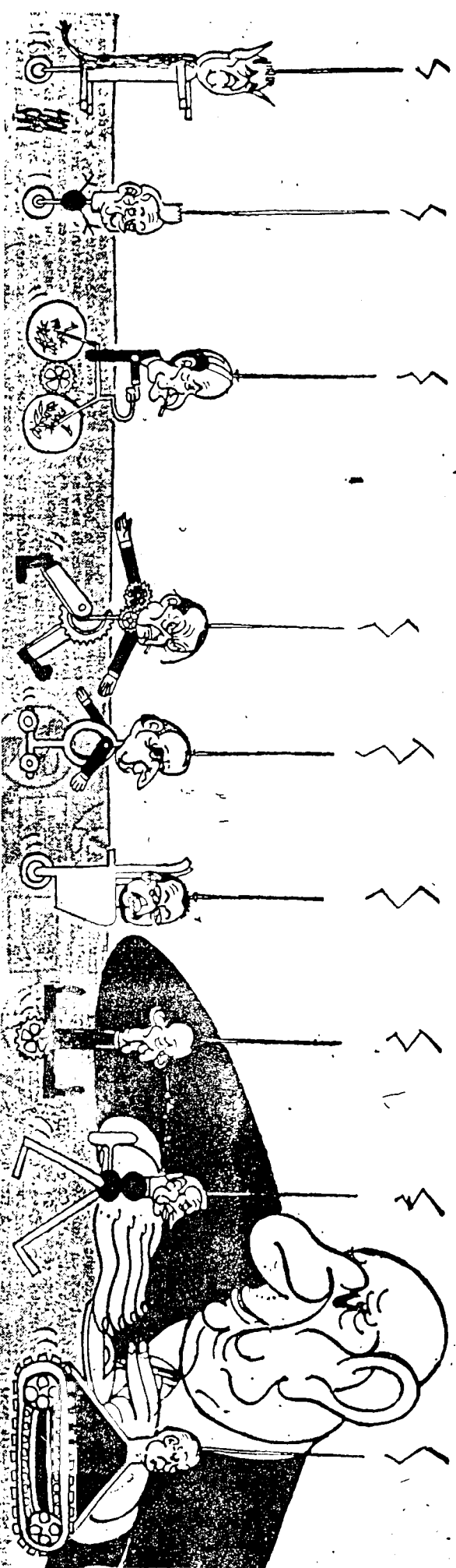


Fig. 1. On the occasion of the Lyons toy fair, the cabinet is depicted as a group of remote-controlled automatons by *Le canard enchaîné*,

3 March 1965.

inconvenience of parliamentary attack. Consequently, as *Le canard enchaîné* put it, "There's the President, and under him there's a vast void. And afterwards there is nothing. And below that, nothing. And then, nothing. But finally one stumbles over the government"⁷⁷.

Opposition politicians also attacked the subordinate position of the Prime Minister. François Mitterrand asked in Parliament why the government had agreed to its own demotion to the position of a consultative committee⁷⁸ and likened the Premier to a political strip-teaser who, under the greedy eyes of the President, steadily shed the prerogatives clearly conferred upon him by the Constitution⁷⁹. The comment was prompted by a decree of 14 January 1964 which, among other changes, provided that the President should decide when the strategic air force should be engaged. Paul Coste-Floret, an MRP deputy, asked in the same debate who was really governing France, before answering his own question - "De Gaulle". He asked why the Prime Minister did not resign, since he no longer existed. Developing his argument, Mitterrand claimed in a major parliamentary debate on the nature of the regime in April 1964 that the government neither determined nor directed policy and that it was not responsible to Parliament. The relationship between President and Prime Minister "fait davantage penser aux rapports d'un maître au pouvoir absolu et de son favori qu'à une Constitution valable pour tous les citoyens"⁸⁰.

⁷⁷ Williams, *Politics and Society*, p. 195.

⁷⁸ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 24 avril 1964, p. 937.

⁷⁹ Wright, *Government and Politics*, p. 67.

⁸⁰ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 24 avril 1964, p. 948.

Such, then, is the kind of evidence used to support many conclusions about the nature of Gaullist government. Revealing as such comments are, one may wonder if they provide a complete picture. A more dispassionate and self-consciously historical examination of the available evidence may produce a rather different conclusion.

GAULLISTS IN GOVERNMENT, 1958-1969: THE DYNAMICS OF GOVERNMENT

In retrospect this kind of debate over the heavy-handed nature of de Gaulle's personal style and over where "true" power resided seems to miss the point. Above all, Gaullist government should be seen as a new way of configuring political power. The innovation represented by the Fifth Republic was not so much that the President assumed greater power to keep parliament under control, or that government was colonised by civil servants who were trained to do de Gaulle's bidding. This was part of a more general trend developing across Europe in the 1960s. The new republic of West Germany was often criticised by opposition politicians as a 'Chancellor Democracy', one in which the power of the Chancellor loomed far too large for there to be real democracy. Others sought to characterise it as a combination of democracy and dictatorship, 'Demokratur'⁸¹. This could also be observed in the USA where President Kennedy sought to restrict debate on the fundamentals of policy to a few selected experts. The Trade Expansion Act of 1962, which gave Kennedy five-year authority to

⁸¹ Mazower, *Dark Continent*, p. 291.

reduce all tariffs by as much as 50 per cent and to cut tariffs by up to 100 per cent on commodities traded mainly by the USA and the Common Market, is a good example of a measure which handed policy control over to the President. Kennedy used dramatic language to justify this, citing the need for a united front in the face of the global threat of the USSR:

“We need a new law - a wholly new approach - a bold new instrument of American trade policy. Our decision could well affect the unity of the West, the course of the Cold War, and the economic growth of our Nation for a generation to come”⁸².

Such language is strikingly similar to that used by de Gaulle to address economic issues (discussed in more detail in chapter five) and illustrates that there was nothing especially remarkable about the Gaullist republic when placed in an international context. Only in a domestic setting did it seem a questionable departure from recent precedents. Arguments about whether de Gaulle and the Gaullist movement destroyed the French Republic or saved it are misleading. Gaullist government should be understood in terms of a wider context which witnessed an increase in the power of so-called experts and a decrease in the importance of partisan debates.

That said, the apparent smoothness with which the new regime functioned did not mean that there was no tension within government. Tensions certainly existed, even if they rarely developed into open conflict. The most obvious example of this was revealed through the relationship between the President and

⁸² Miroff, *Pragmatic Illusions*, p. 190.

the Prime Minister. A similar tension may be observed between the President and his other ministers. The varied nature of the Gaullist movement did manifest itself at the highest level. That this did not register among contemporaries says more about their expectations of the way in which government should work than it does about the reality of the Gaullist system.

The President

The strengthening of the position of the President was undoubtedly the most important aspect of the new constitution. Yet it was excitedly exaggerated by contemporaries, in language which has had a strong influence on later interpretations. What has been lost in the midst of accusation and counter-accusation is a sense of historical perspective. De Gaulle sought to create a strong President and thereby break the hold of the political parties on the state. In this task, he was beginning from a position of weakness. The opposition parties, despite their electoral defeat of 1958, were still influential and powerful⁸³. The parliament elected in 1958 contained several different parties and Debré formed his government in a spirit of consensus. All parties except the socialists and communists participated. There was not such a clear difference between majority and opposition as there would be later in the decade. It was thus essential for de Gaulle to use *every possible occasion* to assert the authority of the President over and against the established parties.

It was something of a shock to professional politicians to be treated in the high-handed manner which de Gaulle favoured.

⁸³ Quermonne, *Le gouvernement*, p. 430.

This explains their outraged reaction to many of de Gaulle's actions, especially his decision to use a referendum to determine whether the President should be elected by universal suffrage. In their minds this amounted to a *coup d'état*⁸⁴. The vote of censure moved against this measure on 5 October 1962 recalled many of the grand mobilisations of the Third Republic; the president of the Senate, Gaston Monnerville, issued a rallying cry to all the "republican parties" to unite in defiance of de Gaulle. The episode carried echoes of the *Seize mai* crisis of 1877, when parliamentary deputies had turned against the Comte de MacMahon's attempt to found an executive independent of the Assembly⁸⁵. It showed that the parties were still alive and well. De Gaulle's aggressive tactics were designed to counterbalance this. It was a means not to ensure the permanent omnipotence of the Head of State, as some of its more vociferous opponents claimed, but to establish an effective counterweight to the political parties. De Gaulle was extremely aware of their ability to remove him from his post and rewrite the constitution. Much critical literature had argued that after the resolution of the Algerian question, the traditional republican parties would reassert themselves and force de Gaulle away from power⁸⁶. This was a prospect which he was determined to avoid. Constitutional reform was thus not a gesture originating from the arrogance of supreme power, as its opponents argued, nor a

⁸⁴ A theme explored by François Mitterrand in his polemical work on the Fifth Republic *Le coup d'Etat permanent*, Paris 1964.

⁸⁵ R. Anderson, *France 1870-1914*, London 1977, pp. 9-11.

⁸⁶ Maurice Duverger in *Le Monde*, 17-18 May 1959; L. Hamon, *De Gaulle dans la République*, Paris 1958, pp. xvii and xxvii; R. Aron, *France Steadfast and Changing*, Oxford 1960, pp. 121 and 135-6; P-H. Simon, *La France à la fièvre*, Paris 1958, pp. 180-9.

vehicle for a Gaullist hijacking of the State, but an admission of the fundamental *weakness* of the President's position.

He was to repeat these tactics in the legislative elections of 1962. As the President was convinced that this contest was about saving the Republic, he intervened clearly on one particular side for the first time. He never launched personal attacks or named any of his opponents:

“Mais j’y mettais assez de vigueur pour exorciser le système d’où sont issus les assaillants et auquel, s’ils parviennent à m’abattre, ils retourneront à coup sûr”⁸⁷.

Even allowing for the General’s habitually dramatic turn of phrase, this comment effectively summarises what the introduction of the Fifth Republic meant to de Gaulle. Every attempt to assert the power of the President against the parties was part of his attempt to defend the stability of the new position created in 1958.

In this he was facing problems familiar to all holders of the presidential office. President Kennedy of the USA was aware of the need to assert presidential authority whenever the opportunity arose. He was acutely aware of the limitations of presidential power, noting that “Every President must endure a gap between what he would like and what is possible”⁸⁸.

De Gaulle, likewise strongly aware of the constraints on his authority, was determined never to miss a chance to assert his authority throughout his time in office. The official declaration of

⁸⁷ C. de Gaulle, *L’effort*, p. 93.

⁸⁸ Miroff, *Pragmatic Illusions*, pp.30-1

the Elysée announcing the formation of the first government of the Fifth Republic on 8 January 1959 was carefully phrased to show that de Gaulle had been the decisive influence in the choice of government ministers⁸⁹. Communiqués concerning cabinet meetings, which took place at the presidential palace, no longer read “le Conseil des ministres s'est réuni sous la présidence du Président de la République,” as under the Fourth Republic. This form of words implied a purely passive presidential presence. Instead the official release read: “Le général de Gaulle, Président de la République, a réuni le Conseil des ministres”. It also informed the French people that Michel Debré

“a soumis à l'approbation du général de Gaulle ses conceptions en ce qui concerne la politique générale et les noms des personnalités qui deviendraient, le cas échéant, ses collaborateurs au gouvernement”⁹⁰.

In this way de Gaulle sought to affirm radically different political procedures. But this occurred against a background of political constraints, not of limitless power. Asserting the power of the President was primarily a defensive move.

It was not simply de Gaulle's desire to re-establish the damaged prestige of the authority of the State which led to an increase in presidential power. The concentration of decision-making was as much *circumstantial* as it was *doctrinal*. During the early years of the regime, the tension and instability created by the Algerian crisis encouraged the General to concentrate power in his own hands. On 14 February 1960, for example, he created the

⁸⁹ *L'Année politique*, 1959, p. 13.

⁹⁰ Avril, *Régime politique*, p. 242.

Committee for Algerian Affairs, over which he presided in order to have more direct control over Algerian policy⁹¹. The committee included ministers, civil servants and de Gaulle's personal associates. *L'Année Politique* for 1960 commented that "Ainsi s'affirment le prééminence du général de Gaulle dans la conduite de la politique algérienne et l'évolution du régime dans un sens présidentiel"⁹². Yet it was an evolution that still could easily have been reversed. The committee was established a fortnight after barricades week at the end of January, when French soldiers, protesting at the sacking of General Massu as commander of the French forces in Algiers after an interview in which he appeared to oppose de Gaulle's Algerian policy, instigated an open revolt against French authority in the Algerian capital. In November of the same year, the General appointed Louis Joxe to the newly-created post of Minister of State for Algerian Affairs, giving him direct authority over Parisian staff dealing with the matter as well as the civil and military authorities at Algiers - responsibility which had hitherto belonged to the Prime Minister. Joxe, in contrast, was answerable only to de Gaulle, significantly reinforcing the President's power⁹³.

After the end of the Algerian conflict and the constitutional reform of 1962, there was a relaxation of the presidential grip on government business. While the General continued his policy of publicly re-affirming the power of the President, in practice

⁹¹ Chapsal, *Vie politique*, p. 389.

⁹² *L'Année politique*, 1960, p. 19.

⁹³ Shennan, *De Gaulle*, p. 101. *L'Année politique*, 1960, p. 122: the promotion of Joxe "indique nettement que le Général de Gaulle entend traiter directement des questions algériennes avec un homme qui a toujours eu sa confiance, et que le Premier Ministre voit ses pouvoirs diminués d'autant."

ministers did run their own departments more or less freely. Statements such as those de Gaulle made at a press conference held on 31 January 1964 should not be taken as a reflection of the actual practice of government. At this infamous meeting, the General argued that the emanation of power from the people “implique que le Chef de l'Etat, élu par la Nation, en soit la source et le détenteur.” He added that “le Président est évidemment seul à détenir et à déléguer l'autorité de l'Etat” and claimed that

“l'autorité indivisible de l'Etat est confiée tout entière au Président par le peuple qui l'a élu... il n'en existe aucune autre, ni ministérielle, ni civile, ni militaire, ni judiciaire, qui ne soit conférée et maintenue par lui...”⁹⁴.

Despite the extensive polemics these comments provoked among contemporary journalists such as Beuve-Méry and Lacouture, the latter dramatically evoking “une immense restauration de siècles de pouvoir monarchique”⁹⁵, they were really only de Gaulle's re-assertion of the democratic legitimacy of the President. They need to be understood in the context of what de Gaulle was trying to achieve politically. He spoke deliberately and repeated similar arguments in a press conference of 27 November 1967⁹⁶. Superficially such statements served as further evidence of the lack of effective counterweights to de Gaulle's exercise of personal power; in actual fact, ministers, and particularly the Prime Minister, were becoming more important as

⁹⁴ C. de Gaulle, *Discours et messages 4, Pour l'effort, 1962-1965*, Paris 1970, pp. 164, 165, 168.

⁹⁵ Lacouture, *De Gaulle 3*, pp. 612, 614. See H. Beuve-Méry (“Sirius”) in *Le Monde*, 2-3 February 1964.

⁹⁶ *L'Année politique*, 1967, p. 399.

they gradually learned to make the best possible use of the new rules.

Furthermore, the election of the President by universal suffrage did not prove to be the route to elective dictatorship that its opponents had feared it would be. The first contest held under the new rules illustrated this clearly. De Gaulle won with only 55 per cent of the vote in the second round run-off against the opponent who had achieved the best score in the first round of voting, François Mitterrand. This was not a mandate for the exercise of absolute power. It was an acknowledgement that de Gaulle was the more popular candidate for the post of President, to govern within the limits laid down in the constitution. He was still a successful political leader but not the incarnation of the unity of all Frenchmen. It was from 1965 onwards that opposition politicians began to grow in confidence. Uniting behind the candidatures of Lecanuet and Mitterrand, the opposition had managed to gain the support of almost half the electorate. Whereas only a few weeks before the election it had lacked a leader capable of mobilising voters, it now had two high-profile figures who had consolidated their image as viable representatives of united political forces⁹⁷.

The first presidential elections thus proved to be a demonstration of the limits of presidential power, not of its supremacy. De Gaulle had been challenged, he had been obliged to abandon his distant style to engage directly, *politically*, with the French people. He had had to speak not only of the institutions of the Republic or of world strategy, but of the population's everyday

⁹⁷ P. Williams, *French Politicians and Elections 1951-1969*, Cambridge 1970, pp. 201-2.

concerns. He had had to *campaign*. The de Gaulle who embarked on his second seven-year term ceased to be the exceptional figure which he had tended to be since his return to power in 1958, and the electors had signalled their dissatisfaction with his government. Far from being an adulatory plebiscite, then, the new presidential elections proved to be a useful opportunity for people to pass judgment on the administration in office. They did not even have to wait until the next legislative elections, they could do so in the middle of the legislature. In this sense, elections under the Fifth Republic during the 1960s were a democratic success.

Further awareness of the weakness of the president's position was raised by the 1967 legislative elections. These were the first in which the possibility of de Gaulle having to share office with a government of non-Gaullists (*cohabitation*) was considered. It was clear that this would prove to be a significant limit on the President's power. De Gaulle's realisation of this is shown by the fact that he decided to intervene directly in the election campaign. On 9 February 1967 he appeared on television to warn the French against the three oppositions “juxtaposées pour détruire... incapables de construire”⁹⁸. He repeated this warning on 4 March, just before the first round of voting. Clearly times had changed since 1958, when de Gaulle had forbidden candidates even to use his name as part of their campaigns⁹⁹. Again, this was not abuse of absolute power, but desperation to preserve what power there was. It was a sign of weakness, not strength. The legislative elections proved an increasingly popular means for people to express themselves during the 1960s; 24 million French people

⁹⁸ *L'Année politique*, 1967, p. 382.

⁹⁹ Press conference of 23 October 1958, *L'Année politique*, 1958, p. 129.

voted for one of the parties in 1967, compared to 21.5 million in 1958¹⁰⁰.

In the event, the Gaullist party won only a narrow victory, leaving it weakened and apparently vulnerable to sudden crises. The recourse to the ordinance procedure, introduced as an emergency measure to deal with social and economic questions, appeared to deprive the newly-elected Parliament of its rights and thus confirmed the dictatorial tendencies of Gaullist government. *Le Monde* journalist Pierre Viansson-Ponté singled them out for criticism in his well-known article on the malaise afflicting France in 1968, 'La France s'ennuie'¹⁰¹. However, in reality, this was a further admission of weakness and desperation. Certainly the President had the constitutional artillery at his disposal to guarantee the authority of the State in such situations. But his alleged omnipotence was simply not in evidence. The President and his government were on the defensive. The President looked vulnerable at any moment to the sort of event that would transform decline into defeat. Such an outcome had nearly occurred in 1965 and 1967; with the 1968 crisis it finally did.

The pattern of events in May 1968 exposed the limitations of presidential power. De Gaulle signalled clearly that no student agitation could deflect the State from its task by flying to Romania on an official visit. After he returned, his speech of 24 May, promising a referendum to empower the President to "faire changer partout où il le faut les structures étroites et périmées"¹⁰², had no effect on the strike movement which had by now spread

¹⁰⁰ Williams, *French Politicians*, pp. 292-3.

¹⁰¹ *Le Monde*, 15 March 1968.

¹⁰² C. de Gaulle, *Discours et messages 5: Vers le terme, 1966-1969*, Paris 1970, p. 507.

from the universities to the industrial sector. His ministers, most notably Prime Minister Pompidou, assumed control. He negotiated settlements with the unions at Grenelle while the President provoked a crisis of State by disappearing for a day. All this made it much easier for Pompidou to appear as the successor to General de Gaulle¹⁰³.

The eventual electoral victory of June 1968 provided a degree of respite. Yet far from being a triumphant vindication of Gaullism, it created as many problems as it solved. The new Chamber, as will be seen in Chapter Four, was composed of conservative deputies who had been chosen by a fearful electorate to preserve order against the threat of revolution. It soon showed itself to be more conservative than the Head of State, and highly suspicious of any initiative which it regarded as too risky. The consolidation of the President's power was more apparent than real. Pompidou was the real victor of the elections. It was his persuasion of the President to abandon the idea of the referendum in favour of elections which had defused the situation¹⁰⁴. He had organised the majority and led it to victory. Many of those who won or who regained their seats in June 1968 could have been forgiven for regarding Pompidou as the real leader of the new conservative majority rather than the symbolic, remote figure of de Gaulle who seemed far removed from everyday politics.

Nine months later, the direct democracy incarnated in the Gaullist institution of the referendum inflicted a decisive defeat on the President when it rejected his plan for reforming the Senate and creating regional councils. The General had provided the

¹⁰³ Williams, *Politics and Society*, pp. 58 and 206.

¹⁰⁴ Larkin, *France since the Popular Front*, p. 325.

French people with an ideal opportunity to remove him from office, which they duly took.

The new powers given to the President of the Republic by the new constitution were undoubtedly important. They represented a significant new departure. De Gaulle was constantly eager to underline their novelty and efficiency. Yet an examination of the political context of the 1960s reveals the limits of the President's power. There were democratic and constitutional ways of sanctioning his approach, and de Gaulle's period of office was a troubled one. The reality of the presidential office in the 1960s was far removed from the descriptions provided by Gaullist constitutional theorists and opposition politicians and journalists.

The next sections will show how ministers attempted to use their initiative. Gaullist government was not a system in which an all-powerful President issued instructions which were then faithfully followed by his subordinates. It was an evolving situation in which all involved were concerned to make the most of their own authority. Gaullism was not interpreted by all as an invitation to remain silent while de Gaulle took care of political affairs. Many Gaullists sought to impose themselves upon the political process. Most notable among them were the first two Gaullist Prime Ministers.

The Prime Minister

In many ways the criticism levelled at the office of Prime Minister by contemporary journalists and opposition politicians was a result of anxiety over the issue of where real power lay. Many felt that the Fifth Republic introduced a potential clash between President and Prime Minister, a risk of “dyarchy”. A

frequent question asked of the new regime was “Qui gouverne la France?”¹⁰⁵. Was it the President or the Prime Minister? There seemed to be considerable potential for disagreements and difficulties at the highest level of state. The office of President and that of Prime Minister were held to embody contradictory political impulses, the former autocratic, the latter parliamentary. Léo Hamon argued in 1958 that

“il y a en réalité, dans le texte de 1958, *deux constitutions*: l'une est celle d'un régime parlementaire assaini, l'autre celle d'une suppléance organisée pour un régime parlementaire classique devenu impossible”¹⁰⁶.

Such a situation was not an ideal recipe for the governmental stability which the Gaullists hoped to establish.

It was the unsatisfactory resolution of such issues which led many to conclude, as we have seen, that real power lay with the President. In this version of reality, the Prime Minister was rendered redundant. Both of de Gaulle's first two Prime Ministers were sacked, even though there was no public or parliamentary demand that they be removed; this made it seem as if it was the decision of the President alone. This was not stipulated in the 1958 constitution, but became established practice. In the press conference of 31 January 1964, de Gaulle argued that the President chose the Premier, appointed him and the other ministers, and was entitled to change him when he had completed the task that the President had assigned to him or because he no longer had the

¹⁰⁵ Addressed in detail in a work of that title by F. de Baecque, Paris 1976.

¹⁰⁶ L. Hamon, *De Gaulle dans la République*, Paris 1958, p. 158; italics in original.

President's approval¹⁰⁷. Pierre Viansson-Ponté consequently wrote in 1959 that those who feared conflict between the two heads of a bicephalous executive could rest assured: there was only one head¹⁰⁸. Yet this was a misleading conclusion. Gaullist Prime Ministers did not deserve the severe criticism hurled at them by contemporary journalists and opposition politicians. The fact was that while the Prime Minister was undoubtedly not the head of government, he still possessed and exercised considerable responsibilities.

Michel Debré was de Gaulle's first Prime Minister. He was generally regarded as a reliable subordinate who would never oppose de Gaulle. He wrote in his memoirs that “j'ai toujours su que de Gaulle devait être à la tête de notre pays et je l'ai toujours voulu”¹⁰⁹. He acquired the nickname of Fidel Castrato¹¹⁰. Maurice Duverger felt that the Prime Minister was so insignificant that he was moved to wonder whether Monsieur Debré actually existed¹¹¹.

Yet with a prodigious capacity for work and a large staff of thirty-four which was equal in size to that of the President, Debré could wield a significant influence in all areas of policy, including the “reserved sector”. It was said that the members of this staff could be interested in everything and better informed on their own departmental problems than the ministers concerned¹¹². Debré could prod them directly into action while insisting that

¹⁰⁷ *L'Année politique*, 1964, p. 421.

¹⁰⁸ P. Viansson-Ponté, *Risques et chances de la V^e République*, Paris 1959, pp. 1 and 8.

¹⁰⁹ Debré, *Combattre*, p. 44.

¹¹⁰ McMillan, *Twentieth Century France*, p. 164.

¹¹¹ “M. Debré existe-t-il?” *La Nef*, July 1959, p. 3.

¹¹² Williams, *Politics and Society*, p. 201.

they communicate with the President only through him. Debré's influence grew steadily, whether in the choice of men, the organisation of the government or the formation of policy. For example, he succeeded in including Soustelle in his first cabinet despite de Gaulle's opposition. The appointment of Nefissa Sid Cara was also a decision on which Debré insisted¹¹³. When the cabinet was reshuffled in August 1961 the decisions were his: Robert Lecourt was dismissed from his post as Minister of State for the *Départements d'outre-mer* because of repeated conflicts with the Premier, Edgard Pisani was Debré's choice as Minister of Agriculture, Edmond Michelet was removed from the Ministry of Justice because he had dealt with FLN prisoners in a spirit closer to de Gaulle's Algerian policy than to Debré's, and Maurice Schumann was not brought in as the President had hoped¹¹⁴. The Prime Minister imposed his conceptions of military organisation on a recalcitrant Ministry of Defence, and decided whether or not his ministers should appear before parliamentary committees which wished to hear them. He sometimes had his way even within the "reserved sector" - the President once announced a shorter term of military service, which nevertheless did not come into force. He even imposed policies on the Ministry of Finance, successfully insisting on increasing investment in backward areas¹¹⁵. An active and passionate reformer, he was both the instigator and the driving force behind the major administrative changes of the early years - in the government of the capital, the prefectoral system, regional development and the main agent of

¹¹³ Debré, *Gouverner*, p. 14.

¹¹⁴ Williams and Harrison, *Politics and Society*, p. 201.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*

progress in many sectors of policy: the Plan, scientific development, agricultural reform, public health. He also led an attempt to settle the vexed problem of Church schools¹¹⁶.

Particularly telling information has been revealed by Pierre Racine, the director of Debré's private office between 1959 and 1962. He reports that the Prime Minister would rise extremely early each morning and dictate a number of letters to ministers.

“Certaines de ces lettres étaient extrêmement détaillées et donnaient même le schéma des projets de loi ou de règlements importants sur les sujets les plus variés aussi bien l'urbanisme que l'agriculture, le commerce extérieur, la politique agricole, ou des questions fiscales”¹¹⁷.

He thus took an active role in relations with his ministers. He was also actively in touch with the politicians who helped ensure the government had a majority in Parliament and held regular meetings with them to swap opinions. Debré kept well informed on events in the Assembly and regarded his job as the maintenance of good relations between government and Parliament. This was de Gaulle's conception of the Premier's role as well as his own¹¹⁸. Debré himself is keen to promote his own closeness to Parliament in his memoirs, citing as evidence of this the fact that he made no fewer than eighteen government declarations in the National Assembly, eleven of which were

¹¹⁶ A. Coutrot, “La loi scolaire de décembre 1959”, *Revue française de science politique*, Vol. 12 No. 2, pp. 352-388.

¹¹⁷ Institut Charles de Gaulle, *De Gaulle et ses Premiers ministres 1959-1969*, Paris 1990, p. 38.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 44.

followed by a debate, and eight in the Senate, two of which were followed by a debate¹¹⁹.

Although as a Gaullist Debré was in favour of giving de Gaulle the most important position in political life, he did not intend this to be at the expense of other parts of the body politic. When de Gaulle challenged him in a private conversation over the issue of whether Parliament should vote on the government's declaration of policy in 1959, claiming that to allow such a vote would constitute a concession to the habits of the Fourth Republic, Debré replied to him in the following terms:

“en exposant la nécessité de respecter le caractère d'un régime qui, certes, n'est pas que parlementaire mais qui ne doit pas réduire les Assemblées à un rôle de figuration”¹²⁰.

De Gaulle consented to the vote, “non sans réticence”, and pointed out in the following meeting of the Conseil des Ministres that this was the Prime Minister's decision, not his own, “qu'il accepte en raison des circonstances”¹²¹. De Gaulle was only acquiescing in the move because he did not want needlessly to antagonise deputies at a delicate time when he needed their support on the Algerian question. He thus perhaps did not want to force too many changes on the Assembly at once. It is clear that this was a significant disagreement between President and Prime Minister, and that Debré secured a victory on behalf of Parliament.

On another occasion during the winter of 1960-1961, de Gaulle asked Debré why the Prime Minister could not simply

¹¹⁹ Debré, *Gouverner*, p. 14.

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 18.

¹²¹ *ibid.*, p. 19.

become a pure administrator, executing policy which had already been decided by the President. Debré resisted this suggestion strongly; de Gaulle's unique status as a national figure could legitimise a greater concentration of power in his hands, but this would be unacceptable in his successors. "Je le sens déçu par ma réponse!" noted Debré, who was evidently concerned to protect Parliament against the presidential tendencies inherent in the constitution of the Fifth Republic¹²².

In fact it could have been the growing stature of Debré which led to his eventual removal. He had too much of an independent political identity. His replacement, Georges Pompidou, was evidently intended to be the opposite. He had never been a member of Parliament, nor even of the Gaullist party. "Je suis totalement transparent", he admitted¹²³. His appointment was interpreted by many as an act of defiance by de Gaulle. But it constituted further evidence of the President's need to strengthen his own position against those of his opponents. These opponents were the political classes, who had disgusted Pompidou as they had de Gaulle and Debré; in 1944, Pompidou was astonished that none of them appeared to have learned anything about the defects of their system from the disaster of 1940. He wrote:

"La guerre n'était qu'un incident venu rompre le cours normal des événements et troubler de façon provisoire le jeu politique. Il fallait tout remettre en état et reprendre la partie là où elle avait été interrompue fâcheusement en juillet 1940"¹²⁴.

¹²² *ibid.*, p. 39.

¹²³ Peyrefitte, *de Gaulle*, p. 103.

¹²⁴ G. Pompidou, *Le noeud gordien*, Paris 1974, p. 36.

Pompidou frequently sought in his public statements and comments to others to deny that his point of view was any different from that of the General. When he became Prime Minister in 1962, he told the new Minister of Information Alain Peyrefitte that

“je n'ai pas d'existence propre. Je ne suis qu'un reflet de de Gaulle. Je n'ai pas de vie politique à moi, pas d'électeurs, pas de clientèle, pas d'implantation, pas de possibilité de voler de mes propres ailes. Je n'ai même pas d'idées à moi en matière politique. Je n'ai que les idées du Général”¹²⁵.

This was the situation which Peyrefitte was expected to convey in his accounts of government business. Yet Peyrefitte noted that as Pompidou was saying this, “La fumée d'une cigarette plantée à la commissure des lèvres l'oblige à cligner en permanence de l'oeil gauche”. The ironic implications of this could not be clearer. Pompidou was reiterating the official rhetoric of the Fifth Republic. The reality, however, was quite different. The former Rothschild's banker was intending to make politics into his new career, and his ambitions extended further than being Prime Minister.

Later, in 1968, Pompidou wrote that as Prime Minister he had been “chargé d'appliquer... une politique définie dans ses modalités essentielles comme dans ses objectifs fondamentaux par le Président de la République”¹²⁶. And in 1968 Pompidou repeated

¹²⁵ Peyrefitte, *de Gaulle*, p. 101.

¹²⁶ Pompidou, *Noeud gordien*, pp. 14-15.

the argument of 1964, outlined by de Gaulle and himself¹²⁷, that the Fifth Republic did not create a risk of “dyarchy”:

“Quand le Président de la République est le général de Gaulle, le risque n'existe pas. L'autorité de la personne est telle qu'un Premier ministre, si longtemps soit-il installé à Matignon, si désireux soit-il, comme il est naturel, de faire valoir ses propres conceptions, ne saurait perdre de vue sa subordination. Une sorte de fidélité intellectuelle s'impose à lui qui le conduit à n'exercer sa propre autorité que dans le sens de la pensée 'gaulliste'”¹²⁸.

But as has been illustrated in the previous section, the political context within which Pompidou's premiership evolved does not fully support this interpretation of events. Though his private office of twenty was much smaller than Debré's had been, its members served for a long period of time and could know their subjects as well as the ministers dealing with them. His authority over his cabinet was never questioned. At the same time his popularity within the UNR grew remarkably during his premiership. He was effective both on television and in Parliament. The UNR parliamentary group in particular appreciated Pompidou's efforts to improve relations between the government and Gaullist deputies; their satisfaction was expressed by Pierre Dumas, Minister for Relations with Parliament, at one meeting of the *Conseil des ministres* in 1962¹²⁹.

¹²⁷ De Gaulle in his press conference of 31 January 1964 and Pompidou in his speech to the National Assembly, 24 April 1964 (see *L'Année politique*, 1964, p. 421 and *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 24 avril 1964, p. 951).

¹²⁸ Pompidou, *Noeud gordien*, pp. 63-4.

¹²⁹ Peyrefitte, *de Gaulle*, p. 198.

There is evidence that Pompidou did distinguish himself from the President and gained increasing influence within the government. He was greatly angered, for example, by de Gaulle's statements about European integration which led to the resignation of the MRP ministers from Pompidou's first cabinet. If the General had allowed someone to read the text of the comments he was intending to make at this press conference, the problem would never have arisen. It was the task of the government, Pompidou felt, to soften de Gaulle's abrasive style. "Nous devons être le gant de velours sur cette main de fer"¹³⁰. This concern dictated Pompidou's determination to influence and, where necessary, alter de Gaulle's decisions throughout his time in office. The notion that Gaullism was frequently best served by opposing de Gaulle was relatively widespread. Jean Marin, head of *Agence France Presse*, argued that "Pour être un bon gaulliste, il faut savoir s'opposer à de Gaulle"¹³¹. This is a clear indication that the ideals of Gaullism and personal loyalty to de Gaulle were not coterminous, the pursuit of the former often excluding the latter.

Similarly, Pompidou was critical of de Gaulle's risk-taking. He was particularly annoyed by the General's approach to the referendum on the election of the President in 1962, which he considered to be over-dramatic. Politics was not an everlasting crusade, but a matter of sound management:

"le Général veut élever toujours plus haut la barre. Il finira un jour par se casser la gueule, et nous avec lui"¹³².

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 133.

¹³¹ *ibid.*, p. 493.

¹³² *ibid.*, p. 233.

Pompidou was thinking in terms of the political careers of the Gaullists. The General knew he was approaching retirement, and this perhaps made him less concerned about the consequences of some of his declarations. Pompidou and the Gaullists perhaps realised that in order to preserve their own careers, they had to change or distance themselves from de Gaulle's behaviour. This did not mean that they should be disloyal; as Pompidou told government spokesman Alain Peyrefitte, Gaullists will benefit in the future from having worked for the General. "C'est un peu de sa gloire qui nous retombera dessus," said the Prime Minister in 1962¹³³. But this had to be combined with the establishment of their own distinctive identity.

One example of an issue on which Pompidou was determined to prevent de Gaulle from getting his own way was on the issue of participation. Pompidou's dislike of Vallon and Capitant, the *gaullistes de gauche*, was well known and confirmed when they drifted away from Gaullism when he became President of the Republic. He considered it unfortunate that de Gaulle was attentive to their ideas and was determined to prevent these ideas ever becoming actual policy. "Il faut mettre le Général à l'abri de ces billevesées. C'est une façon de lui rendre service". Pompidou never intended to make the association of the world of work to national economic life a priority of his government: "... c'est de ces choses dont on parle beaucoup et qu'on ne fait jamais"¹³⁴.

Peyrefitte's accounts of cabinet meetings suggest that Pompidou was growing in self-confidence and stature. Although he might not be able to alter fundamentally the direction of policy by direct

¹³³ *ibid.*, p. 102.

¹³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 442.

opposition to de Gaulle, he could stand up to him in lesser but significant ways. A discussion on economic policy in 1963, for example, led to Pompidou correcting de Gaulle on a specific matter with the words “c'est économiquement inexact”¹³⁵. He may not have attempted to force the President to change his ideas, but he was able to stand up to him both in private and in public and enforce his own arguments.

Couve de Murville was perhaps the Prime Minister of the 1960s who most accurately lived up to the polemics directed against all the holders of the office by contemporary political opponents. He did not stamp his authority on his government, neither was he popular. His tenure was dominated by university reform, which was primarily the work of Edgar Faure, and the reform of the Senate and the regional reform, none of which was his responsibility. In addition, the government was hit by a devaluation crisis to which de Gaulle dictated a solution. Even the faithful party newspaper *La Nation* found space to express doubts about Couve de Murville's suitability for the post of Prime Minister:

“Peut-etre pouvait-on lui reprocher... d'etre resté le diplomate qui, pour ne blesser personne, enveloppait sa pensée de voiles un peu flous”¹³⁶. .

Maybe with more time Couve would have developed a more distinctive style and distinguished himself from the General. His short period in office left few clues as to his political personality.

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 526.

¹³⁶ Henri Ribadeau-Dumas writing in *La Nation*, 27 November 1968.

The personalities of the previous Prime Ministers, however, had left their mark both upon the office they had held and upon the Gaullist approach to government. They had shown that there was scope for some individual initiative within the framework of the Fifth Republic and within Gaullism. Other Gaullists must have observed the example which they set and concluded that Gaullism did not equate with subservience to de Gaulle.

The Prime Minister also possessed useful institutional means of exercising power, such as the informal *comités restreints*. These were called irregularly by the Prime Minister to study individual problems, and were presided over by him¹³⁷. There were 118 such meetings in 1961 and 116 in 1965 (an average of nine per month); they could be used by the Premier to co-ordinate policy in the direction he favoured.

In addition, interministerial meetings brought together civil servants from different government departments to co-ordinate their activities, under the aegis of the Prime Minister. This enabled him to assume a good measure of control over the work of individual departments. There were 142 of these meetings in 1961 (an average of eleven per month) and 356 in 1965 (twenty-nine per month); this increase represents a clear growth in the power of the Prime Minister¹³⁸. Although the general secretariat of the Elysée was kept informed of the frequency of such meetings at Matignon and the President usually sent one of his technical advisers to attend, the control which the Prime Minister exerted over State administration in this way was a source of real authority.

¹³⁷ Quermonne, *Le gouvernement*, p. 216.

¹³⁸ *ibid.*

Given the political context within which the premierships of de Gaulle's Prime Ministers evolved, and the means they had at their disposal for directing and often determining policy, it is easy to see why some commentators have concluded that the Fifth Republic is a system in which the Head of State has the *eminent* role and the Prime Minister the *useful* role¹³⁹. Such a definition, however, cannot do justice to the reality of the process of government. While there can be no doubt that de Gaulle had ultimate control over the administration, it should also be stressed that at least two of his Prime Ministers did have their own ideas and did attempt to carve out some sort of distinctive niche for themselves. Although official records are not yet available, the evidence which does exist in the form of published memoirs and other records suggests that there was much more to the process of government than met the eye in the 1960s.

The input of ministers

Interestingly, the 1958 Constitution, with its insistence upon the powers of the President and of the Prime Minister, makes virtually no references to ministerial responsibilities. One may deduce from this that ministers were of secondary importance, or that they were expected only to execute the President's wishes.

In many ways it is unsurprising that Gaullist government ministers received such a bad press. The subdued reports given by the Minister of Information after each cabinet meeting confirmed the general impression of a government which did not disagree on any issue, a situation which could only be explained by the fact

¹³⁹ Gicquel, *Essai*, p. 207. See also Quermonne, *Le gouvernement*, pp. 218, 220.

that none of them dared speak their mind if it meant contradicting the General. Their own comments, designed to proclaim and maintain the official goal of collective responsibility, stressed points of agreement between themselves and de Gaulle or between themselves and other ministers. One minister claimed that cabinet meetings resembled funeral wakes, the difference being that the corpse spoke¹⁴⁰. Pierre Sudreau, Minister for Territorial Improvement and subsequently Minister of Education until 1962, said in a recent interview that “les ministres en conseil étaient extrêmement prudents et évitaient d'encourir les réactions”¹⁴¹. Similarly Yves Guéna, Minister for Post and Telecommunications from 1962 to 1969¹⁴², was keen to stress the lack of conflict at the meetings:

“Au conseil des ministres, il n'y avait pas beaucoup de discussion... le Général avait étendu son emprise sur l'ensemble du conseil... il n'y avait pas de semi-opposants... le général de Gaulle dominait complètement le conseil des ministres, il n'y avait absolument aucun problème d'aucune sorte”¹⁴³.

Maurice Couve de Murville, Foreign Secretary from 1958 to 1968 and then Prime Minister for the last year of De Gaulle's presidency, indicated in his memoirs that he and the General saw all problems the same way. When he was appointed, he was delighted that French foreign policy would at last obey the

¹⁴⁰ Cited in Jackson, *De Gaulle*, p. 80.

¹⁴¹ Interview with Pierre Sudreau, recorded 25 May 1994, archives orales, Institut Charles de Gaulle, Paris.

¹⁴² Including a brief spell as Minister of Information in Pompidou's last cabinet in 1968.

¹⁴³ Interview with Yves Guéna, recorded 24 January 1995, archives orales, Institut Charles de Gaulle, Paris.

principles he himself favoured: "Par la suite, cette harmonie sur l'essentiel se confirma constamment, quitte naturellement à ce que l'on discutât des voies et moyens des opportunités"¹⁴⁴. Olivier Guichard, one of the so-called 'barons' of the RPF and eventually a UDR deputy and Minister for *L'Aménagement du territoire*, remained faithful to the idea of the General as an exceptional individual and chose to stress de Gaulle's deep influence over him: "j'ai choisi dès le début, vis-à-vis du Général, un état de dépendance volontaire. 'Le plus bel état', disait Goethe, qui ajoutait: 'Et comment serait-il possible sans amour?'"¹⁴⁵.

It is difficult to establish exactly what took place at cabinet meetings. Official records are not available at present. But it is possible to establish a few different conclusions by re-examining the existing evidence. Peyrefitte, who was actually present at cabinet meetings, unlike most of the journalists and political scientists who have passed judgment on them, claimed that there were lively exchanges and that he had witnessed de Gaulle change his mind on several occasions as a result of cabinet discussion. The *conseil des ministres* remained a meeting at which a minister could, if he wanted, express dissatisfaction¹⁴⁶.

It is often overlooked that Jacques Soustelle, whose comments have determined so many interpretations of Gaullist government, had never sat in a cabinet before and was writing as a bitter enemy of de Gaulle; his comments that no discussion was allowed must thus be treated with extreme caution¹⁴⁷. Robert

¹⁴⁴ M. Couve de Murville, *Une politique étrangère 1958-1969*, Paris 1971, p. 9.

¹⁴⁵ O. Guichard, *Mon Général*, Paris 1980, p. 7.

¹⁴⁶ Peyrefitte, *de Gaulle*, p. 467.

¹⁴⁷ Williams, *Politics and Society*, pp. 197-8.

Buron, a minister with much longer and more varied experience, said that cabinet debates on Algeria in the Fifth Republic were more vigorous than those on Tunisia or Indochina in the Fourth, and that President de Gaulle was a more patient chairman than President Auriol¹⁴⁸. One should not underestimate the degree of influence exerted by the President of the Fourth Republic over the *Conseil des ministres*: Auriol spoke to its president before each meeting, was given the dossiers and agenda the day before it took place, decided who should speak and drew his own conclusions which were not always the same as those of the president¹⁴⁹. Even more significantly, Buron records cases of ministers forming alliances within the cabinet in order to influence policy over even so controversial a subject as Algeria¹⁵⁰. There was extensive debate on several occasions, such as on 19 September 1962 when the cabinet debated de Gaulle's proposal that the President of the Republic should be elected by universal suffrage. Pierre Sudreau demanded that de Gaulle abandon the idea and resigned from the cabinet soon afterwards. Pierre Viansson-Ponté, describing this meeting, commented that: "Désormais, on discute et à l'avenir, on discutera"¹⁵¹. Debate became more normal practice. And in reality, the "contingencies" or "procedural matters" with which the government dealt were not minor affairs but significant aspects of policy. In practice, de Gaulle left much of the daily management of

¹⁴⁸ R. Buron, *Le plus beau des métiers*, Paris 1963, pp. 221-3.

¹⁴⁹ Avril, *Régime politique*, p. 241.

¹⁵⁰ R. Buron, *Carnets politiques de la guerre d'Algérie*, Paris 1965, Part II, Ch. 1 and 2, especially pp. 119-20.

¹⁵¹ P. Viansson-Ponté, *Histoire de la république gaullienne 2: Le temps des orphelins*, Paris 1971, p. 39.

policy to the government¹⁵². This must have left a significant margin for ministerial activity. French ministers and officials were able to have considerable freedom of action within the lines of a policy laid down by de Gaulle¹⁵³. They cannot be dismissed as mere yes-men.

Furthermore, the criticism of contemporaries and political scientists implies a decisive role for the *conseil* which it had only very recently acquired. During the Third Republic, most government work was done in other meetings such as the *conseil de cabinet*¹⁵⁴. Only under the Fourth Republic did it become the main decision-making body as it was the place where the representatives of the different parties met to debate policy. In reality, the governing process was a great deal more complex than those who have focused on the relative “inactivity” of the *conseil des ministres* have been prepared to recognize. Just as the fact that the Prime Minister would not disagree with the President in public did not mean that he was powerless, so the fact that cabinet meetings were relatively free of infighting does not mean that they were completely ineffectual.

Although the *conseil de cabinet* rarely met during Debré's Premiership and never during that of Pompidou, much use was made of inter-ministerial committees. These were presided over by de Gaulle, who pointed out at the end of his first septennate, that he had presided over 420 such meetings¹⁵⁵. They consisted of ministers and *hauts fonctionnaires* and studied specific issues. They

¹⁵² Knapp, *Gaullism since de Gaulle*, p. 335. Cf. Bernard Tricot's comments in Institut Charles de Gaulle, *De Gaulle et ses Premiers ministres*, Paris 1990, pp. 128-9.

¹⁵³ Hartley, *Gaullism*, p. 25.

¹⁵⁴ Williams, *Politics and Society*, p. 349.

¹⁵⁵ Press conference of 9 September 1965, *L'Année politique*, 1965, p. 557.

enabled decisions to be reached by a small number of ministries concerned with a limited number of subjects. In addition there were the more informal *comités restreints* and the interministerial meetings mentioned above.

The fact that there existed other forums for the discussion and drafting of policy helps to explain why meetings of the *conseil des ministres* lacked drama. They were designed for ratification, not decision-making. Although it is unfair to brand the cabinet as a rubber stamp, as this underestimates the degree of discussion which did actually occur, it is true that it was not necessarily the most vital link in the governing process. This consisted of the interministerial and interdepartmental committees, which did most of the real work before it was presented to the government as a whole.

The input of civil servants

Another factor advanced to explain the relative docility of Gaullist administrations was the number of civil servants promoted to the rank of minister. De Gaulle's first cabinet in 1959 was especially striking in this respect: key ministries, such as the Foreign Office, Defence, Education and Commerce and Industry were all given to *hauts fonctionnaires*¹⁵⁶. In total, 40 per cent of the ministers in this cabinet were civil servants, although this proportion declined during the decade to 19 per cent in 1968¹⁵⁷. These figures offer a significant indication of how Gaullism expected government to behave. They suggest that the role of

¹⁵⁶ Namely Maurice Couve de Murville, Pierre Guillaumat, André Boulloche and Jean-Marcel Jeanneney.

¹⁵⁷ Both figures from Quermonne, *Le gouvernement*, p. 480.

ministers was essentially technical and managerial, which could in effect mean to become the faithful and faceless executants of the presidential will. Couve de Murville, who during his time as Minister of Foreign Affairs seemed to carry diplomatic discretion to the lengths of total self-effacement, seemed to be the most striking illustration of how a career bureaucrat could hold the very highest responsibilities of state. His commentaries on the international situation in cabinet were criticised by Soustelle for being “conçu et présenté comme le rapport d'un fonctionnaire”¹⁵⁸.

The main concern for commentators upon this tendency was that it created a gulf between the governors and the governed. Many analysts have argued that elected representatives are better qualified to become ministers since they have enjoyed more regular contact with national realities, thus giving them a broader, less technical perspective¹⁵⁹.

Although Gaullism was singled out for criticism for its part in the apparent increase in the power of civil servants in government, there was nothing particularly Gaullist about this. Georges Pompidou did not want a Republic of technocrats¹⁶⁰, and during his time as Prime Minister civil servants became less significant within government. When he became Premier in 1962 the proportion of members of Parliament in government rose to three-quarters, and in the October election most ministers stood and won seats¹⁶¹. The appointment of so many in 1959 seems with hindsight to have been a measure of expedience not a trend

¹⁵⁸ Soustelle, *L'Espérance*, p. 97.

¹⁵⁹ P. and J-D. Antoni, *Les ministres de la V^e République*, Paris 1976, p. 82.

¹⁶⁰ Pompidou, *Noeud gordien*, pp. 202-3.

¹⁶¹ Williams, *Politics and Society*, p. 199.

intrinsic to Gaullism. At that time the “political” ministers belonged to parties which either had opposed de Gaulle in the past, such as the MRP or the CNI, or like most of the UNR professed deep loyalty to de Gaulle but had passionate views on Algeria where he intended to keep a free hand. The President was obliged to turn to non-politicians to find men who could be relied on faithfully to execute his policies¹⁶².

The colonisation of government by civil servants was, like the increase in governmental stability, more apparent than real. Civil servants had always been significant figures in government, as members of ministerial *cabinets*. The only way in which this changed with the advent of the Fifth Republic was that these people became ministers themselves. As a result of this, and partly as a result of the spirit of national unity around Gaullism, there was a less partisan air within government than had previously been the case. Again, it was the shock of the change of political culture that led many to draw unfavourable conclusions. The increase in influence of civil servants was not a consequence of the Gaullist philosophy of government, but of the evolution of the nature of government which was taking place in most European countries at the time, as well as in the United States where Kennedy had attempted to introduce a system in which the opinions of experts were the most important ones. The 1960s saw the creation of the modern class of *fonctionnaires*, educated at the ENA, which had trained them to be civil servants *and* politicians. The distinction between the two was not as clear as it had been in the past.

¹⁶² *ibid.*

The argument that civil-service training has caused French politicians to be less responsive to the wishes of the people is not ultimately one which can be proved or disproved. It is essentially a theory which has been used as a means to criticise individual ministers, such as Couve de Murville, for being out of touch. A more accurate description of the reality of the Fifth Republic would refer not to the “fonctionnarisation” of government, but to the politicisation of the civil service. This was not a phenomenon necessarily associated with Gaullist government. It was merely used by opponents of the regime to attack Gaullist administrations.

The development of the role of trained administrators in government is a good indication of how government was changing across Europe in this period. It was becoming more consensus-based, professional and managerial¹⁶³. It was not a matter, as many opponents of Gaullism and of the regime claimed, of the triumph of authority over democracy. If triumph there was, it was of a new European style of government which the ruling elites of the time felt was best able to deal with social, political and economic change during the 1960s.

Stable Government?

For many Gaullists the greatest political improvement brought about by the Fifth Republic was the introduction of governmental stability. For proof of its popularity, they could point to a 1965 opinion poll in which 27 per cent of those asked mentioned stable government as the greatest achievement of de

¹⁶³ K. D. Bracher, “Problems of parliamentary democracy in Europe”, *Daedalus* Vol. 93 No. 1 (Winter 1964), p. 185.

Gaulle during his first term as President, as against 14 per cent who said it had been the resolution of the Algerian conflict¹⁶⁴. The French Republican regime had traditionally been one in which governments changed frequently. Jacques Fauvet pointed out in 1957 that in three-quarters of a century France had had more governments than years¹⁶⁵. In the year before the collapse of the Fourth Republic, France was ruled by a caretaker government for one day in every four¹⁶⁶. Guy Mollet's assertion that the government consisted of the assembly and the cabinet¹⁶⁷ was confirmation for the Gaullists of the suspicion with which Republican politicians had always regarded governments and confirmation of their determination that Parliament should run the country. In de Gaulle's version of history the Fourth Republic represented twelve lost years of inflation, devaluations, and political instability which were replaced by a regime which offered stability, prosperity and prestige. One Gaullist claimed that stable government irritated the established political classes: "Ils se considèrent comme diminués parce qu'ils ne peuvent plus faire tomber le gouvernement à leur gré"¹⁶⁸.

It was one of the Gaullists' proudest claims that they had put an end to all this. De Gaulle, presenting the new constitution at a rally on 4 September 1958, insisted on the need for "un gouvernement qui soit fait pour gouverner"¹⁶⁹. Gaullist party publications enthusiastically pointed out during the 1960s the

¹⁶⁴ *Sondages*, 1966 (1), p. 25.

¹⁶⁵ J. Fauvet, *La France déchirée*, Paris 1957, p. 9.

¹⁶⁶ Wright, *Government and Politics*, p. 14.

¹⁶⁷ Interview with *Le parisien libéré*, 28 February 1946.

¹⁶⁸ Georges Becker, UNR deputy for the Doubs, in *La Nation*, 9 May 1962.

¹⁶⁹ *L'Année politique*, 1958, p. 551.

radical change the Fifth Republic had brought to the manner in which the country was ruled¹⁷⁰. France now possessed “un gouvernement qui gouverne”. Ministerial crises were a thing of the past. When the MRP ministers resigned from the government in 1962 as a result of comments made by de Gaulle on the subject of European integration, they were speedily replaced, so that *La Nation* could note with satisfaction that “Pompidou a résolu la 'petite crise' en quelques heures hier au soir”¹⁷¹. Vincent Auriol's improbable conviction that “where there are no cabinet changes there is no liberty”¹⁷² seemed to confirm how far out of touch many French politicians were and justify the Gaullists' description of them as “les hommes du passé”¹⁷³. Michel Debré proudly referred at the party's Nice *assises* in 1963 to the stability of the new institutions and the stability of the conduct of public life in general as the foundation of all that Gaullist governments had accomplished¹⁷⁴.

Such “stability” was, however, more apparent than real. One socialist pointed out in 1961 that under the Fourth Republic Prime Ministers changed, but ministers remained: under the Fifth the Prime Minister remained but the ministers changed¹⁷⁵. By the end of de Gaulle's first septennate, there had been only two Prime Ministers and three governments, both Prime Ministers being Gaullist, supported by a Gaullist majority in the National

¹⁷⁰ From mid-1965 to early 1966 *La Nation* published a series of articles detailing the failures of the Third and Fourth Republics, drawing contrasts with the efficiency of current practice.

¹⁷¹ *La Nation*, 17 May 1962.

¹⁷² *L'Année politique*, 1959, p. 137.

¹⁷³ See for example Jacques Baumel in *La Nation*, 19-20 October 1963; he contrasted the “old” ways of conducting politics with the “modernity” of Gaullism.

¹⁷⁴ *La Nation*, 25 November 1963.

¹⁷⁵ Francis Leenhardt, *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 5 décembre 1961, p. 4573.

Assembly¹⁷⁶. Yet only three members of the 1958 government headed by General de Gaulle were still ministers, and only one, Minister of Foreign Affairs Couve de Murville, was still in the same post. During the first ten years of the Fifth Republic there were 25 government reshuffles (some of them, admittedly, no more than changes of one or two individuals) and, by 1969, France had had twelve Ministers of Education, eleven Ministers of Information, six Ministers of Justice, Finance and the Interior and five Ministers of Agriculture and Labour since 1958¹⁷⁷. During the second Parliament of the Fourth Republic, by contrast, though there had been eight Prime Ministers (and seven effective governments) in a period of between four and four and a half years, three ministers served in six of the governments, seven in five and thirteen in four. The Minister of Education was always a Radical and so (with one exception) was the Minister of the Interior¹⁷⁸.

The Gaullists' claims to have introduced governmental stability where none existed before are somewhat misleading. The changes they introduced could be presented as a matter of style rather than substance. In many senses it seems that the cabinet reshuffle was merely the ministerial crisis under another name, the way in which political tension manifested itself in the Fifth

¹⁷⁶ There was not an overall Gaullist majority in the National Assembly until after the 1968 legislative elections, but the support in 1962 of some thirty members of the *Républicains Indépendants*, and of about double that number in 1967, gave the Gaullists an effective majority.

¹⁷⁷ Pickles, *Government and Politics*, p. 72.

¹⁷⁸ P. Campbell, "Cabinet and Constitution in France, 1951-6," in *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 9 No. 3 (Summer 1956), p. 300.

Republic¹⁷⁹. The Gaullist approach to government by no means precluded intra-governmental rivalry and conflicts.

CONCLUSION

In much writing on Gaullism there appears to be an implicit assumption that the Gaullist approach to government, while maybe not fundamentally authoritarian in principle, certainly was so in its application during the 1960s. This chapter has attempted to show that this assumption oversimplifies the workings of government during the 1960s. While it was true that ultimate authority resided with de Gaulle, some Gaullists did try to make their own contributions to the governing process. The constitutional ideas of Michel Debré and Achille Peretti show that there were Gaullists who were actively considering alternatives to the existing system, and in expressing their ideas openly were perhaps voicing some of the concerns of other Gaullists. In addition, while it was true that de Gaulle cast a long shadow over decision-making during the 1960s, the Prime Minister and his ministers did have scope for exercising their own authority. They were working according to the rules of a regime, and did not have a blueprint for what they were trying to do. De Gaulle's flexible and improvisatory habits when in office can only have made them even more uncertain. When more official records of Gaullist government appear, more records of discussion and debate will surely emerge. The Gaullists, as Alain Peyrefitte points out in his memoirs, were masters at keeping information about the workings

¹⁷⁹ Bernstein, *La république gaullienne*, p. 126.

of government hidden from the public¹⁸⁰. Access to archives in the future will expose some of these.

The diversity of Gaullism did not destabilise government, far from it. It is true that the executive remained powerful. Rather than this being the triumph of 'authority' over 'democracy', however, this represented the new style of government which came to the fore throughout Western Europe in the 1960s. The polity was changing in ways which were beyond the control of de Gaulle or the Gaullists; France was passing decisively beyond the parliamentary stage of its history. This was more than some fanciful 'discrediting' of the Fourth Republic. It was a much more general trend towards a different configuration of political power. The Gaullist government attempted to fulfil a particular kind of managerial mission; their conception of a new type of democracy, like that of politicians in office in the UK and West Germany, involved using power to improve education and health services and initiate reform in areas of social and civil rights. As in the UK, French governments made good use of the language of modernisation. As we shall see in the next chapter, this became a central theme of the Gaullist party in its propaganda during this decade. Gaullist governments did their best to prove that their style represented an irrevocably new departure.

¹⁸⁰ Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, pp. 16-17: "Le Général et Georges Pompidou m'ont inculqué la religion du secret, comme ils l'ont inculquée à tous leurs collaborateurs... Comme porte-parole, j'appris que, si ma fonction était de parler, mon devoir était de me taire"

CHAPTER THREE

GAULLISM AND THE GAULLIST PARTY

SUMMARY

“L'UNR qui veut exprimer le peuple tout entier n'est pas un Parti comme les autres”¹.

This statement, made by the secretary general of the Gaullist party in 1959, illustrates well the ambition of the party during the 1960s. It sought to be different from the political parties of the Fourth Republic which had preceded it and their latter-day incarnations, the parties of the opposition. What was meant by being different, however, by not being “a party like the others”, was never entirely clear during this decade. While there were those who felt that the Gaullist party being different from the parties of the Fourth Republic meant unquestioning support for de Gaulle, others felt that it implied the articulation of a distinctive approach to politics that would clearly distinguish the Fifth Republic from the regimes of the recent past. Others believed that the very notion of “party” was alien to the aspirations of Gaullism as frequently defined by de Gaulle in his regular tirades since 1946 against the parties of the Fourth Republic. Eventually, as this chapter hopes to show, the leaders of the Gaullist party decided that it needed a distinctive identity. While they never fully overcame the diversity of views within Gaullism, they invented a

¹ “Le rapport d'Albin Chalandon”, *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, Special edition on Bordeaux *assises*, November 1959.

language of modernisation and efficiency for the party which made it into something more than the party of the General and enabled it to survive his departure from office with a remarkable degree of success. Although this identity never commanded the full support of the party, as chapter four will demonstrate, and never led to it becoming more distant from de Gaulle, it was a powerful unifying force which was the nearest Gaullism came to achieving a single identity during this period.

Gaullism had, however, always been wary of the term “party”. By attempting not to be a party like the others, the Gaullists sought to create a new kind of movement, one which would ensure the stability of democracy and participate in it at the same time. This was a dilemma for many; as the party's first secretary general Albin Chalandon asked, how could the Gaullists guarantee the survival of the government and be a healthy democratic force, contributing to discussion and debate, at the same time? This was the dilemma at the heart of Gaullism and it was never really fully resolved during the decade. It was an issue which concerned the Gaullist leaders greatly and which went to the heart of their attempt to create a new kind of political force, appropriate for the new France of the 1960s.

The attempts to develop a distinctive identity for the Gaullist party which would make it into an embodiment of political change occurred in several stages. Initially, secretary general Albin Chalandon attempted to define a coherent strategy for the Gaullist party which would enable it to assert its own personality while at the same time firmly supporting the government. During the early years of the Fifth Republic, this project was undermined by the tensions within the party over the Algerian conflict. This period

was one of great instability within the Gaullist party. Once the Evian Agreements had been signed in 1962, however, new secretary general Jacques Baumel set about defining an approach to politics which he hoped could become an alternative focus to de Gaulle for party members. In so doing he articulated a clear identity for the movement which required little or no reference to the General. Baumel's approach provided a hint of the reorganisation of the movement that was to come at the end of the decade. This gave the Gaullist party a clearer structure which could match the clarity of its message of modernisation.

The party's reorganisation, however, suggested that it had not succeeded in its initial aim of not being a political party. Eventually, Gaullists were forced to accept that to compete successfully in the political arena, they had to adopt the effective organisational structures that would enable them to survive. The party could no longer afford to rely upon the presence of de Gaulle as Head of State to guarantee its electoral success. This was clearly illustrated by the General's unexpectedly narrow victory in the presidential elections of 1965.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in many ways the Gaullist discourse of modernisation and efficiency was the common currency of many political parties of the 1960s. In the UK, the Labour Party's *Signposts for the Sixties* spoke of the need to modernise the economy and promised to implement a clear strategy to manage it more efficiently than its opponents could. In West Germany, the SPD had, at its Bad Godesberg conference of 1959, abandoned its revolutionary aim of transforming and overthrowing the capitalist socio-economic order in favour of working for incremental change within the capitalist system. The

formation in 1967 of the so-called Grand Coalition between the supposedly centre-right Christian Democrat CDU and the allegedly socialist SPD seemed to suggest that politicians had decided to bury their ideological differences inherited from the past and pool their resources in order to manage the country's resources more effectively. In this way, the language of efficient management and modernisation became the shared discourse used by political leaders of the 1960s to express the aspirations of a rapidly changing society. In France, it was the leadership of the Gaullist party which adopted this discourse as a way of presenting their movement as the catalyst for a new kind of politics.

INTRODUCTION

During the 1960s the Gaullist party² enjoyed an unprecedented hegemony over the French political scene. Its electoral success was as resounding as it was unforeseen. Only seven weeks after its formation, it attracted more than four million votes in the legislative elections of November 1958, taking 199 seats in the new parliament. Many thought that this result would not be reproduced at future elections, and predicted the party's demise³. Yet as Fig. 1 illustrates, not only did the Gaullist party survive, it improved consistently on its 1958 performance and in

² Originally the *Union pour la nouvelle République* (UNR), it later fused with the *Union démocratique du travail* after the legislative elections of 1962 to form the UNR-UDT before becoming the *Union des démocrates pour la République* (UDR) in 1967.

³ "... rares sont ceux qui ne la pensent pas alors vouée, comme le RPF six ans plus tôt, à l'éclatement et à la mise en sommeil." J. Charlot, "L'Union pour la nouvelle République: un bilan", *Revue française de science politique*, Vol. 17 No. 1 (Feb. 1967), p. 78. Almost half of those questioned in an opinion poll in February 1959 thought that the UNR's success was temporary (*Sondages* 1959, 2, pp. 45-6).

June 1968 polled almost ten million votes, winning an absolute majority in the Assembly with 296 deputies.

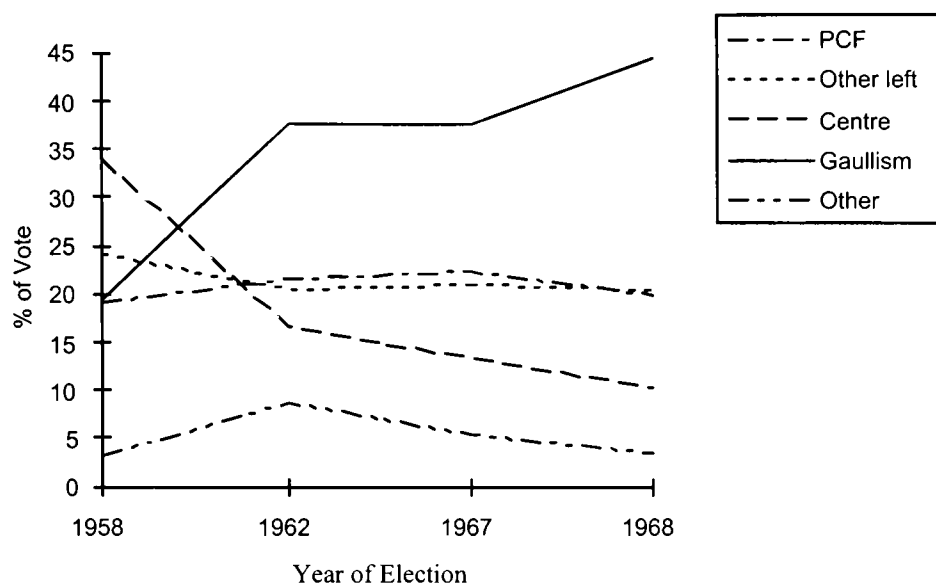


Fig. 1 Election results in France, 1958-1968

Many contemporaries explained the success of the Gaullist party with reference to the popularity of General de Gaulle. This seemed logical: the party's central slogan during the 1958 election campaign was “UNR=de Gaulle” and its candidates promised to support the General loyally. One of the party's earliest official publications proudly stated that “L'Union est fidèle au Général et à sa pensée politique, en un mot au gaullisme”⁴. Its only function appeared to be providing the initiatives of the President with the parliamentary support they needed to ensure a veneer of democratic respectability. Maurice Duverger asserted that “En votant pour l'UNR le pays a voulu voter de Gaulle”⁵, describing

⁴ *UNR Bulletin de presse*, 6 November 1959.

⁵ *Le Monde*, 28 November 1958.

the UNR as a “parti sans doctrine, où des éléments hétérogènes se coagulent autour d'un homme”⁶.

Opposition parties sought to turn this impression to their advantage. The candidate's handbook issued by the *Parti radical* for the 1962 legislative elections advised prospective deputies to argue that the UNR suffered from the same problem as the RPF; it could not possibly be a meaningful political force without General de Gaulle and would thus inevitably cease to exist after his death or retirement from politics⁷. The principal Socialist party, the *Section française de l'internationale ouvrière* (SFIO), in its campaign guide issued at the same time, made a similar point: “Cette brillante équipe... n'a en commun qu'une 'gaullâtrie' qui durera ce que durera le surhomme”⁸. Meanwhile Joseph Fontanet, a Centrist, writing in *Forces nouvelles* in 1966, complained that the only point on which the governing party could agree was its absolute confidence in de Gaulle's ability to take sole responsibility for running France's affairs⁹.

The comments of contemporary observers and opposition parties have, despite their often manifestly partisan nature, had a certain degree of influence on more scholarly interpretations of the Gaullist party. R-G. Schwartzenberg wrote in 1973 that the UNR, invented solely to support the Head of State and his policies, did not aspire to an independent existence. “Pour que de Gaulle soit

⁶ *Le Monde*, 5 December 1958. Similar comments were made by other journalists: Pierre Limagne in *La Croix*, 17 October 1958; the editorial of *Paris-Presse*, 22 May 1959; *The Economist*, 21 November 1959, and Paul-Marie de la Gorce in *L'Express*, 28 April 1960.

⁷ Radical Party, *Dossier du candidat, arguments et ripostes*, November 1962, Institut d'études politiques de Paris.

⁸ SFIO, *Dossier du candidat*, November 1962, Institut d'études politiques de Paris.

⁹ *Forces nouvelles*, 13 May 1966.

tout, il fallait qu'elle ne soit rien"¹⁰. Jean-Christian Petitfils added that unconditional support for the General was the sum total of the Gaullist party's political programme¹¹. Other writers, French, British and American, have advanced similar arguments¹², while those few historians who have tackled the subject in a more general way have not substantially deviated from this view¹³. This general consensus suggests that the evidence provided by the Gaullist party seems to confirm the accuracy of Max Weber's observations on charismatic power; that political parties led by strong leaders necessarily suffer from a "loss of soul" among their partisans¹⁴. Such views, however, do not do justice to the complexity of the Gaullist party and overlook the attempt it made to make a distinctive contribution to the governing process.

THE ORIGINS OF THE UNR

The question of the identity of the Gaullist party came into focus after its election victory of 1958. One journalist complained that the UNR had no doctrine and asked "Où est le gaullisme?"¹⁵. Examining the origins of the UNR, it is easy to see why there was doubt as to its true personality. At first it appeared to be a coalition formed only to support de Gaulle, and it was unclear which aspects of this coalition were the dominant ones.

¹⁰ *Le Monde*, 7-8 October 1973.

¹¹ Petitfils, *Le gaullisme*, p. 109.

¹² See for example Wright, *Government and politics*, p. 190-1; Hayward, *One and Indivisible*, p. 15; Stevens, *Government and politics*, p. 226.

¹³ See for example Larkin, *France since the Popular Front*, p. 295; Williams & Harrison, *Politics and Society*, p. 217.

¹⁴ M. Weber, *Le savant et le politique*, Paris 1963, pp. 159-60.

¹⁵ Title of article by André Chêneboit, *Le Monde*, 2 December 1958.

The *Républicains Sociaux*

The emergence of the new Gaullist party can best be understood through detailed examination of the events of 1958. The UNR's history should not start at 1 October of that year, the date of its official foundation, but at 11 June, when Jacques Chaban-Delmas, president of the *Républicains sociaux* (RS), launched the *Mouvement pour la Cinquième République*. This was designed to organise the campaign for a “Yes” vote in the referendum to give de Gaulle responsibility for a new constitution. Those organising the movement wanted it to be seen as an informal one: “Il ne s'agit pas de créer un nouveau parti, mais de réunir des hommes de bonne volonté qui devraient travailler jusqu'au référendum dans une atmosphère de 'trêve des partis'”, said Chaban¹⁶. The notion of a “trêve des partis” was an important one; it emphasised the way in which Gaullists intended to put their political action at the service of the nation rather than at the service of a party. It also reflected the belief of those involved that this was a temporary and exceptional moment in French politics, rather than a permanent change. They remained ill at ease with the very notion of Gaullism being a political party. The RS consisted of the remainder of the RPF parliamentary group which had been obliged to adopt another name in the wake of de Gaulle's formal dissolution of the party in 1953¹⁷. This period had been a difficult one for the group; they found it difficult to decide whether to use their position in Parliament to oppose the Fourth

¹⁶ *Le Monde*, 13-14 June 1958.

¹⁷ Some deputies joined other parties, but the RS continued to argue for the installation of de Gaulle as Head of State.

Republic unconditionally, as Michel Debré did from the Senate, or whether to become more involved in the process of forming and supporting governments, in the manner of Jacques Chaban-Delmas. This dispute led to Chaban being replaced as the group's president by Edmond Michelet in January 1958¹⁸.

Chaban was able to resume the presidency, however, when Michelet became in May of that year a member of the government, presided over by de Gaulle, which was to bring about the end of the Fourth Republic. He was thus in a position to issue a statement on behalf of the RS launching the *Mouvement pour la Cinquième République*. This was to serve as the basis for a later federation of all the Gaullist movements; on 22 July the movement changed its label to *Union civique pour le référendum en vue de l'avènement de la Cinquième République*, and appointed Pasteur Vallery-Radot as president. Later, this became part of the *Comité de coordination des mouvements gaullistes*, along with the *Association nationale pour le soutien de l'action du général de Gaulle*, the *Union pour le Renouveau Français* (URF) and the *Convention Républicaine* (CR). This group organised the campaign in favour of a "Yes" vote in the referendum on the new constitution on 28 September. This was the basis, or the "first sketch", of the UNR¹⁹.

L'Union pour le renouveau français

The UNR's founding meeting on 1 October 1958 brought together seven different groups. The most important of these was undoubtedly the RS. Two other important groups became

¹⁸ Terrenoire, *De Gaulle et l'Algérie*, p. 18.

¹⁹ R. Frey, *L'UNR, sa victoire, son avenir*, speech of 19 December 1958 at Théâtre des Ambassadeurs, Paris, Box CD, Institut Charles de Gaulle, pp. 4-5.

constituent parts of the UNR; these were the *Union pour le Renouveau Français* (URF) and the *Convention Républicaine* (CR). The differing profiles of these two groups illustrate well the diversity of Gaullism. Of particular significance was the fact that the former's main preoccupation was the maintenance of French rule in Algeria.

Founded as the *Union pour le salut et le renouveau de l'Algérie Française* (USRAF) in 1955 by the then governor-general of the colony, Jacques Soustelle, its stated aim was to “grouper tous les Français qui, sans distinction de croyances, de métiers ou d'opinions politiques, [voulaient] agir pour le salut de l'Algérie”²⁰. In April 1956, the group published a statement insisting that Algeria must remain part of France and persuaded fifteen influential personalities to sign, among them another two former governors of the colony: Georges Le Beau and Marcel-Edmond Nagelen²¹. Its membership included many non-Gaullists and its activities were supported by some syndicalists, intellectuals and one Catholic bishop. It was thus an organisation which, although led by an associate of de Gaulle, was primarily concerned with the fate of Algeria, and this was to lead to intense conflict within the new party.

The *Convention Républicaine*

The CR, by contrast, was primarily concerned with campaigning for de Gaulle's return to power as an end in itself. Its leading figures were all former members of the *Forces Françaises*

²⁰ *Union pour le salut et le renouveau de l'Algérie Française*, “Qu'est-ce que l'USRAF?”, 1955, p. 2, Institut d'études politiques de Paris.

²¹ “Appel pour le renouveau et le salut de l'Algérie Française”, April 1956, Institut d'études politiques de Paris.

Libres (FFL), *Forces Françaises Combattantes* (FFC) and of the RPF. Despite this apparent common background, however, the CR became the focus for ideological disagreement. Its main activity was petitioning the Elysée, yet members disagreed over the terms in which these petitions should be worded. Indeed, these disagreements were so severe that on one occasion the CR was obliged to deliver two separate messages to President René Coty. One had been drafted by Marie-Madeleine Fourcade, former head of an FFC network, and another had been drafted by Yvon Morandat and other former members of the RPF. In a letter written to Mme Fourcade, Morandat argued that her petition had been too “right-wing” in tone, and that it was essential also to mobilize left-wingers in favour of returning de Gaulle to power²². This was an early sign of the unease which was to surround the notions of “right” and “left” within Gaullism throughout the 1960s. Ultimately the party leadership attempted to subsume differences between “right” and “left” into a common pursuit of modernisation. Arguing that conceptions of “right” and “left” were outdated fitted comfortably into their general presentation of Gaullism as a dynamic, efficient, practical force unburdened by the ideological rules of the past. Yet these tensions were to remain a persistent theme of Gaullism’s evolution during the 1960s.

Eventually the members of the CR persuaded Léon Delbecque, former secretary general of the RS in the Nord region and a former RPF delegate there, to become president of their association. The group published a manifesto and on 2 September introduced itself to the general public at a press conference led by

²² Unpublished letter of 9 May 1958, archives Jacques Dauer, Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, D 22.

Delbecque. He claimed that the *Convention* consisted of “new men” with no professional interest in politics but forced by the dramatic events of May 1958 to save France from a deteriorating situation. In this way he sought to distinguish the group from the *Républicains Sociaux*: it included none of the major figures of the RPF. In an attempt to wrest the initiative from the other groups, he asserted the paramount importance of the events of 13 May 1958 for Gaullism. He argued that “l'appel *du* général de Gaulle, le 18 juin 1940 [et] l'appel *au* général de Gaulle, le 13 mai 1958, sont inséparables” because both originated in “l'instinct de conservation de notre peuple. A deux reprises le redressement national s'est appelé le gaullisme”²³. The parallel he drew between 1940 and 1958 was to be repeated frequently over the next few years in Gaullist party propaganda as Gaullists sought to argue that de Gaulle had saved France twice.

These three groups, then, made up the uneasy partnership of the Gaullist movement throughout 1958. Although they all supported de Gaulle, they were separate movements with contrasting concerns and they initially insisted on retaining their own identities even though they agreed to join together for the forthcoming election campaign under the common name of UNR. The Gaullist party would grow from these complex beginnings.

Other groups

They were joined in this enterprise by three other groups. One was the *Comité d'information et d'action nationale de l'Algérie et du Sahara* (CIANAS), represented by Ali Mallem; he was

²³ Charlot, *L'UNR*, p. 33.

effectively the delegate of the Algerian Committees of Public Safety and his presence ensured that Gaullism was seen to be especially concerned about the fate of Algerians. Another was the *Comités ouvriers pour le soutien de l'action du général de Gaulle*, represented by Jacques Veyssières and Albert Marcenet, which consisted primarily of those who had been involved in the *Action ouvrière* wing of the RPF. The other group to join in the founding of the UNR was the *Action* network, a loose association of former members of the Resistance and the Free French forces.

There was one other group present at the UNR's founding meeting, however, which chose not to join the new movement: the *Association nationale pour le soutien du général de Gaulle*. They were not alone in their caution about the new party: André Malraux, Minister of Culture, declined the offer made to him to be one of the party's founder members. Other prominent Gaullist personalities, such as Georges Pompidou, Gaston Palewski, René Capitant and Louis Vallon, did not even attend the initial meeting. It was thus clear from the very beginning that one could be a Gaullist without belonging to the UNR, that there existed, between Gaullism and its political incarnation, a gap or a difference in perspective which allowed a greater freedom of action for those involved, most significantly, of course, for the General himself. De Gaulle had told Louis Terrenoire some years before: "Je ne veux pas être ligoté"²⁴. By emphasising the subordinate status of the UNR from its inception, Gaullists could achieve the kind of autonomy which they felt was needed during the delicate negotiations taking place over the Algerian question.

²⁴ L. Terrenoire, *De Gaulle 1947-1954: Pourquoi l'échec?* Paris 1982, p. 234.

In addition, it re-asserted the notion that there was more to being a Gaullist than being a member of a political party. Gaullism was a new type of force, unlike its opponents because one was not obliged to sign up to a party in order to promote its objectives.

Given the diversity of its constituent groups, and its uncertain status, it is not surprising that the UNR became rapidly involved in a series of debates and disputes over what its role within Gaullism should be. Electoral success could not disguise the fact that the party was a complex phenomenon, and it would be subject to internal tensions during the years leading up to the eventual solution of the Algerian problem in 1962. Gaullism was not solely a group of individuals brought together by a desire to support de Gaulle in power, but a coalition of different groups who had their own ideas about what Gaullism should mean. The volatility of this coalition, and its uneasiness with defining itself as a political force, was to cast doubt on the identity of the Gaullist movement in what was its very difficult gestation period.

The 1958 Election Campaign

To general surprise, Jacques Soustelle did not become president of the new party. De Gaulle's opposition to the very existence of such a post ensured that the movement would have no clear leader²⁵. This would not help it in its mission to find a role for itself - and this is of course exactly what de Gaulle intended. He believed that there should be no possibility of the movement developing a sense of loyalty to anyone but himself. This reinforced the impression that the UNR occupied a subordinate

²⁵ Jacques Richard, de Gaulle's representative at meetings of the party central committee, indicated that this was the General's view. (Charlot, *L'UNR*, p. 39).

position within the Gaullist movement; de Gaulle's decisions appeared to take priority over the party's views. If Soustelle, an outspoken supporter of *Algérie française*²⁶ were to occupy a post that could make him a potential pole of opposition within the movement, de Gaulle might have come into conflict with the party over the Algerian question, which would have undermined both de Gaulle's approach to it and the regime that had been brought into being to solve it. The fact that this possibility existed illustrated the underlying vulnerability of de Gaulle's own position. He had to take every opportunity to reinforce it, even at the expense of his own supporters. This was to cause problems for de Gaulle in power and raise serious issues of loyalty and integrity among his supporters.

The official party campaign stressed the unity of the Gaullist movement behind the General, and gave the prestigious name of de Gaulle a prominent place in the party's statement of aims, referring to it ten times in the model election address suggested to candidates²⁷. The slogan which appeared most frequently on campaign posters was "UNR=DE GAULLE". Alain Peyrefitte, standing for the first time as a candidate in the November legislative elections, was advised by the local party official to base his campaign around the phrase: "Je suis pour de Gaulle et de Gaulle est pour moi"²⁸. He was also informed by campaign coordinator Roger Frey that the UNR needed deputies who would be ready to follow de Gaulle with "corpse-like obedience"²⁹. Frey

²⁶ Terrenoire, *De Gaulle et l'Algérie*, p. 23.

²⁷ J. Charlot, *Le gaullisme*, Paris 1970, pp. 88-92.

²⁸ Peyrefitte, *de Gaulle*, p. 39.

²⁹ "perinde ac cadaver", the Latin phrase used by Jesuits to describe the nature of their loyalty to the Pope. Frey used military as well as religious imagery: "Nous n'avons pas

did not want brilliant individuals, like those RPF deputies elected in June 1951, who would abandon the movement at the first opportunity³⁰. In public, the party had decided that its most effective strategy would be to present itself as the loyal follower of the General.

Behind the scenes, however, Soustelle was attempting to force the UNR to adopt keeping Algeria French as official policy. Although he had received no authorisation to do so from the party's central committee, he discussed the possibility of giving official UNR support to any candidate who was a supporter of *Algérie française* with fellow sympathisers Georges Bidault, André Morice and Roger Duchet and drafted a manifesto with their help. Debré, Chaban, Michelet and Delbecque were, however, all opposed to such a move, so the manifesto was dropped and Soustelle resigned from the central committee³¹. This did not mean that all electoral pacts with any political group were forbidden; in some areas agreements were made with other parties such as the *Centre des indépendants*, the *Centre républicain*, the radical-socialists and the MRP. Such alliances did not, however, have the kind of meaning Soustelle would have liked³².

The Gaullist party, despite the consistency of its message, was not a united force at the 1958 elections. The party newspaper openly recognised this, using the existence of disagreement at the highest level of the party to illustrate the democratic nature of the Gaullist movement: "Elles sont animées parfois, ces séances du

besoin de cavaliers caracolants, mais de piétaille impavide sous la mitraille... N'oubliez pas que la discipline fait la force des armées." (Peyrefitte, *de Gaulle*, p. 38).

³⁰ Charlot, *L'UNR*, p. 42.

³¹ Soustelle, *L'espérance trahie*, p. 71.

³² Charlot, *L'UNR*, p. 41.

Comité Central! Chacun s'y exprime en pleine liberté, démocratiquement en pleine égalité en des discussions ouvertes..."³³. Meanwhile Guy Ribeaud, an unsuccessful applicant to be UNR candidate for the 18th *arrondissement* in Paris, presented a number of candidates against UNR ones under the label *Renouveau et fidélité*. Although none of these were successful, their presence did create the impression that the UNR was not the only party that would support de Gaulle³⁴. The *Centre de la réforme républicaine*, Gaullists with a more explicitly left-wing message who would ultimately assume the name of *Union démocratique du travail* (UDT), stood as an independent force but were also comfortably beaten.

The problem of whether Gaullism was "right-wing" or "left-wing" would recur over the decade in the shape of disagreement between members of the UNR and members of the UDT. The leadership of the Gaullist party, as the next section will illustrate, attempted to overcome this by spreading a message of modernisation and efficiency which could appeal equally to both sides of the party. Its argument that the "old" ideologies of right and left were no longer relevant to the France of today was certainly a reflection of the new social realities to which many 1960s politicians were attempting to formulate a response. For it was not just the Gaullists who communicated this kind of message; it was true of politicians in the UK, West Germany and the USA. It was a far from unique voice, but it was well suited to the Gaullists; it could distinguish them from the opposition parties without obliging them to assume any political baggage from the

³³ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, March 1959.

³⁴ Charlot, *L'UNR*, p. 42.

past. Yet perhaps most importantly for some leaders of the Gaullist party, such as Albin Chalandon and Jacques Baumel, it was a way of reconciling the divergent political impulses of many within their ranks. As Baumel himself said:

“Notre volonté est de ne pas rester sous l'accusation de parti conservateur. Nous ne sommes ni de droite ni de gauche, ce sont là des appellations périmées”³⁵.

In 1958, despite the euphoria of victory and the subsequent official merger of the UNR's constituent groups into one party, it was clear that Gaullism had not gone into the elections as a single force. This lack of unity would resurface in several ways throughout the decade; perhaps never in a way that placed the commitment of the Gaullists to supporting de Gaulle in doubt, but it would be present nevertheless.

THE ROLE OF THE UNR

Albin Chalandon was appointed secretary general of the UNR in February 1959. He replaced Roger Frey, a long-term collaborator of the General who had been treasurer of the RPF. According to the rules laid down by the new Gaullist movement, Frey could not remain in the party if he were a government minister. The change was greeted by the new party newspaper as a sign that a new era for Gaullism was beginning. Frey represented the heroic heritage of Gaullism as the primary force

³⁵ Speech to secretaries of local federations in Paris, March 1963, reported in *La Nation*, 21 March 1963.

for resistance to the Nazi occupier, while Chalandon, a former finance inspector, represented its new phase which would require it to become involved in administering national affairs. Gaullism was no longer in opposition but in government³⁶. Already, Gaullists recognised the need to evolve and adapt to a new period of history.

It was however unclear what form this new era heralded by the party newsletter should take. Initial euphoria over the approval of the new constitution, the UNR's success in the legislative elections, de Gaulle's installation as President of the Republic and his choice of Michel Debré to be the new Prime Minister soon gave way to nervous uncertainty as to how the party should behave. Chalandon publicly gave voice to the party's hesitations. How, he asked at the parliamentary study days of 14-15 April 1959 held at Asnières, was the party to maintain its own identity without compromising its supposedly absolute loyalty to the General³⁷? Chalandon described the Gaullists as secret agents whose leader, de Gaulle, covertly made use of them to further his own ends but would not hesitate to disown them if their existence was discovered³⁸. This problem was exacerbated in his eyes by the presence of non-Gaullists in the General's cabinet, such as Antoine Pinay, who occupied the important post of Minister for Economics and Finance. The party was thus asked to assume responsibility for policies it had not been consulted about and of which it sometimes disapproved, so it was not surprising that it ventured

³⁶ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, March 1959.

³⁷ Chalandon speech to the UNR deputies in the salle Colbert, 12 February 1959, *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, March 1959.

³⁸ Speech at Asnières "Journées d'information", *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, May 1959.

to express criticisms on various occasions, without, of course, actually *opposing* the government. It was evident that Chalandon's attitude was finely balanced. As he himself admitted in the party journal, such a strategy was not without risks:

“Sommes-nous devant l'alternative d'avoir à renoncer à être nous-mêmes pour soutenir le gouvernement ou, au contraire, d'avoir à approfondir notre originalité quitte à risquer le désaccord?”³⁹.

Disagreeing with the hero of 18 June 1940 was not a course of action to be taken lightly. Examining Chalandon's statements about the role of the Gaullist party, the reader is at first struck by the professions of loyalty to de Gaulle which they contain. He outlined the UNR's function in its first newsletter as follows:

“Apporter à de Gaulle et au gouvernement qu'il a choisi un soutien *inconditionnel* pour tous les problèmes qui mettent en jeu l'intérêt national et dans lesquels la personnalité du chef de l'Etat se trouve engagée”⁴⁰.

Such comments conveyed a clear message about what the Gaullist party stood for. Similarly, at Asnières, he had said that fidelity to de Gaulle was the party's principal inspiration, and at the first meeting of the party's national council in July, speaking of the relationship between de Gaulle and the UNR, he appeared to exclude any possibility of positive contributions from Gaullists by pointing out that “nous sommes sa chose et il n'est pas la nôtre”⁴¹.

³⁹ Article entitled “La personnalité politique de l'UNR” in *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, March 1959.

⁴⁰ *UNR Bulletin de presse*, 26 February 1959.

⁴¹ *UNR Bulletin de presse*, special edition, 6 November 1959.

Evidently he was concerned to stress the party's support for the President of the Republic.

Yet this was not the only message which the secretary general of the Gaullist party sought to convey. At the same time, Chalandon also insisted upon the UNR's right to independence. As he argued in the internal party newsletter, the *UNR Bulletin de Presse*, "Cette acceptation des grands choix fait par de Gaulle *n'implique pas pour autant* l'abdication de la personnalité politique de l'Union"⁴². On the contrary, he argued, it was the democratic duty of the Gaullist party to assert itself and propose policy ideas to the government: "il est bon que s'exprime une tendance collective de notre Union, et que celle-ci essaie de faire prévaloir ses vues"⁴³. Loyalty did not mean inactivity; support did not mean the abandonment of individual opinion.

The secretary general was not arguing that the movement elaborate its own ideology. Indeed, in his comments he carefully refrained from referring to any goals which could be termed as ideological even in the loosest sense. The kind of opinions he felt the new party should be expressing were useful, practical suggestions which would help the government to govern more effectively. At the same time, it would remind electors of the distinctive existence and activity of the UNR. This may not seem a particularly ambitious objective but it was all part of the attempts made by some Gaullists to identify Gaullism as a new kind of political movement.

Chalandon was not alone in advancing this view. Roger Frey, his predecessor as UNR secretary general, speaking at the

⁴² *UNR Bulletin de presse*, 26 February 1959.

⁴³ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, March 1959.

Théâtre des ambassadeurs in Paris had pointed out that in the constitution of the Fifth Republic, the President's role was described as that of an “arbiter”. If de Gaulle was truly to be an arbiter, said Frey, then he needed to be confronted by different points of view.

“... il faut des thèses en présence... Il est donc absolument nécessaire pour nous, si nous voulons éviter ce que le général de Gaulle n'a pas voulu, c'est-à-dire le pouvoir présidentiel, que nous ayons des conceptions personnelles et précises”⁴⁴.

Bertrand Flornoy, the president of the UNR's youth section, had followed this lead at the 1959 *journées d'études parlementaires* (parliamentary study days), a meeting for all Gaullist deputies. He argued that the UNR should have “une méthode propre afin d'apparaître comme un mouvement original intrinsèquement libre, face au pouvoir exécutif”⁴⁵.

If the party was to become a forum for the discussion and articulation of policy proposals, it followed that there would have to be open and democratic debate. This point was made by the party newsletter in a factsheet it published for subscribers to distribute among potential supporters:

“Dans la majorité, au sein même des listes d'union, des nuances sont possibles, car le rassemblement des volontés et des espérances fondamentales doit s'accommoder des différenciations qui sont le sel de la vie de la Nation”⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ R. Frey, *L'UNR*, p. 14. Italics added.

⁴⁵ Bertrand Flornoy, report on “Les partis politiques classiques et l'Union”, *UNR Bulletin de presse* special edition on the Journées parlementaires d'Asnières, 15 May 1959.

⁴⁶ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, March 1959.

Maintaining the party's independence was a task which went hand in hand with internal party democracy. Contributing ideas to political debate was an essential part of national life. There were people within the Gaullist party who felt that it should participate as an equal of the other parties and not allow itself to be prevented from speaking its mind by its official stance as the party of support for de Gaulle.

How these ideas could be translated into practical politics was unclear. Chalandon did not hesitate to take the initiative in offering his own interpretation. In December 1958, immediately after the legislative elections of that year, before even becoming secretary general of the movement, he presented a report on economic policy to the UNR central committee. The text was published in full in the internal bulletin for the newly-elected UNR deputies⁴⁷. In the preface to this work, it was asserted that even if not all of the measures Chalandon had proposed had been accepted by the government, the analysis it contained of the economic situation, especially the pressing need for fiscal reform, was still held to be accurate⁴⁸. Chalandon disagreed with the government's insistence on austerity and judged the current priority to be stimulating the economy⁴⁹. This was evidently intended as a first attempt at articulating a “party line” which could be clearly distinguished from that of the government.

⁴⁷ Albin Chalandon, report presented to the UNR central committee, 15 December 1958, *Documentations et informations parlementaires*, February 1959, pp17.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.1.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.1.

Chalandon was one of the first Gaullists to articulate a distinctive approach to politics and to encourage others to adopt that view.

Remarkably, Chalandon did not confine his critique to the party's internal publications: in a declaration to the press at the end of 1958 he refused to endorse wholeheartedly the government's economic policy, and stressed instead the differences of opinion between the party and the government. Despite this the UNR, due to its belief in governmental stability, would not withhold its support altogether, as the old parties of the Fourth Republic might have done, but would continue to use its influence to press for a more dynamic approach to economic policy. This meant that it would be pressing the government to prevent sudden crises, to achieve full employment, and to ensure that the burden of progress would not be carried by one particular social group⁵⁰. The language used here was significantly different from that used by the government which the party supported. It could also be interpreted as a direct attack on Pinay as Minister of Economics, a prominent non-Gaullist in the government. As such it would be a striking illustration of the Gaullist party's sense of identity at such an early stage in its existence.

Nor were the party's criticisms limited to economic policy. When the government announced the abolition of pensions for war veterans, the communiqué issued by the secretariat of the UNR noted the measure's "sécheresse administrative" and promised that in the future the Gaullists would press for measures which took more account of veterans' rights and needs⁵¹. That the

⁵⁰ Secrétariat général de l'UNR, circulaire général, 31 December 1958, Box CD, Institut Charles de Gaulle, Paris.

⁵¹ Secrétariat général de l'UNR, circulaire général, 20 February 1959, Box CD, Institut Charles de Gaulle, Paris.

Gaullist party should add its voice to those members of the opposition parties who had criticised this measure surprised many within the movement. Chalandon's message was abundantly clear: although the government could generally rely on the support of the UNR, it could by no means expect unquestioning docility.

Meanwhile the proliferation of press articles in which the Gaullist party criticised those in power continued. In February 1959 the *UNR Bulletin de Presse* included an editorial entitled “L'UNR veut une vraie relance économique”. With reference to Chalandon's December report, the author of the article pointed out that the government's plans did not conform to the wishes of the party, which would have preferred to see more emphasis on the stimulation of production rather than on reducing consumption. In fact, the article said, the public had the UNR to thank for the modification of the measures, which went too far too quickly and had understandably been opposed⁵². In this way the UNR sought to display its independence and its ability actively to influence government decisions. It did not merely propose alternatives, it ensured that they were put into effect.

In the handbook for party candidates in the 1959 municipal elections, in which the UNR again disassociated itself from the austerity programme, it proclaimed its determination to continue this role, saying: “[L'UNR] se réserve le droit de continuer à proposer ses solutions propres”⁵³. Chalandon showed this was not an empty promise when later the same year he published the conclusions of a round-table meeting he had convened to study

⁵² “L'UNR veut une vraie relance économique”, in *UNR Bulletin de Presse*, 26 February 1959 (Italics added).

⁵³ UNR, *Dossier du candidat aux élections municipales*, March 1959, Economic and Financial affairs, A 3, Institut d'études politiques, Paris.

France's economic situation. In this he claimed the administration's modernisation plan was unambitious and complained that it contributed nothing to the agricultural sector⁵⁴, comments which were reiterated the following month in an interview with the financial newspaper *Les Echos*⁵⁵. During his time as secretary general of the Gaullist movement, Albin Chalandon gave a clear indication of his vision of Gaullism. He saw it as a force for economic efficiency, decisively bringing France into the modern age and improving the living conditions of all the French people. By criticising the government when he felt it was not succeeding in this aim, he also showed that to be a Gaullist was not to be submissive. Gaullists had to have faith in their own opinions - rather as de Gaulle had done in June 1940.

One striking aspect of Chalandon's attempt to develop the identity of the Gaullist party was that he did not use the language of any particular ideology to justify his opinions. He never claimed that the government was 'too right-wing', even when some of his views, such as his criticism of the insistence on austerity, could have been interpreted as 'left-wing' attitudes to the economy. Instead, he offered practical proposals and concrete suggestions, seeking to create an image of modernisation and efficiency. His actions were the first step in the leadership of the Gaullist party's campaign to identify itself as a new kind of political movement which did not fit either category of 'right' or 'left'. In this way it would be able affirm its identity in an original and distinctive way.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵⁵ *Les Echos*, 22 June 1959.

Relations with the government

Belief in such constructive criticism was not shared by all in the Gaullist party, let alone by Gaullists outside it. In particular, Chalandon's activities were badly received by the Gaullists in government. Prime Minister Debré had already shown himself to be annoyed by public criticism of the government, which he regarded as indisciplined and characteristic of the parties of the Fourth Republic which he had fought so hard to replace. In a television broadcast in March 1959, he had already reminded critics that economic recovery, given the disastrous situation bequeathed by the Fourth Republic, would take time⁵⁶. This did not prevent Chalandon from writing to Debré in June 1959 on behalf of the UNR central committee, to criticise the government's general political orientation and to demand closer links between the executive and the UNR. He pointed out that the Gaullist party had just learnt from the press that the government, without warning its supporters, had decided to increase child benefit. This letter came after several angry meetings of the central committee, which in May, for example, had unanimously condemned the subordinate position the government wished to force upon the UNR; a problem which Chalandon addressed in his speech to the *Conseil National* at the end of July. According to him, the party's status as principal supporter of the government gave it the right to an important role in government. "Ce que [l'UNR] doit demander, c'est d'exercer une influence qui corresponde à son poids dans la majorité et au Gouvernement..."⁵⁷.

⁵⁶ Television broadcast, 21 March 1959; *L'Année politique*, 1959, p. 36.

⁵⁷ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, August-September 1959.

The dispute about the role of the Gaullist party reached its climax at the first UNR congress, held at Bordeaux in November 1959. This meeting served as a striking illustration of the complexity of the Gaullist movement. It is evident that in the minds of some, there was no incompatibility between being a Gaullist and criticising a government formed by de Gaulle. Ultimately, however, the UNR's attempt to achieve autonomy in its early years was compromised at Bordeaux by the national political crisis which had originally brought Gaullism back to power: Algeria.

THE ALGERIAN PROBLEM AND THE UNR

The Algerian war exercised a decisive influence over the development of the Gaullist party. The debate over the attitude it should adopt towards this most bitter of France's post-war conflicts caused sharp divisions and focused attention on the problem of how active the party could be in promoting its own approach to politics. For there were those within the party, such as Jacques Soustelle and Léon Delbecq, who wished to persuade the government to adopt a particular policy: absolute refusal of Algerian independence. In the context of the Algerian conflict, de Gaulle and many of his supporters regarded this as unacceptable. Solving the Algerian problem was a delicate task for which he required, and did not hesitate publicly to demand, absolute political discretion. For Gaullists to campaign openly for the maintenance of Algeria as a French territory would be to destabilise the government's work and risk civil war in France. This was the point of view which was ultimately to silence the

Gaullist party in its early tendency towards independence from de Gaulle and his government.

The earliest official documents produced by the party administration carefully avoided any clear statement concerning Algerian independence. The section of the candidates' handbook for the 1958 elections devoted to the colony simply contained the text of de Gaulle's Constantine speech of 3 October of that year and that of his press conference of 23 October on "la paix des braves". These two speeches should form the basis, the handbook said, of all the candidate's arguments on Algeria. The model speech provided stressed the necessary freedom of manoeuvre of the Head of State in this matter. It pointed out that although de Gaulle had returned to power as a result of events in Algiers, he was not, and never had been, the prisoner of any one particular interest group, such as the army, as his political opponents had claimed⁵⁸. He was the only political figure capable of ending the Algerian war and thus should be left to conduct matters as he saw fit.

Much more emphasis was placed upon the social and economic development of Algeria than on the issue of whether the colony should or should not remain French. This shows that the party leaders had decided to avoid direct responsibility for the decisions taken with regard to Algeria and to argue that only General de Gaulle could resolve the problem. This would enable him to grant the territory its independence if necessary, and would also prevent policy being determined by the *Algérie Française* faction. A large majority of the deputies elected in 1958,

⁵⁸ UNR, Dossier du candidat aux élections législatives de 1958, model speech (II, "annexes pratiques"), p. 43, Institut d'études politiques de Paris.

however, proved to be vocal supporters of the maintenance of French rule in Algeria. In addition, it was known that prominent figures such as Debré, now Prime Minister and one of the most vocal critics of the Fourth Republic's attitude towards Algeria, and Soustelle, the leader of the URF and now Minister of Information, were also against independence. Conflict within the party was thus inevitable.

Factional conflict

This conflict had first manifested itself through an attempt by the *Algérie Française* faction to oust secretary general Albin Chalandon. He was targeted by them as the man most responsible for taking the party in the wrong direction. Their first attack on him came after the UNR's poor performance in the first round of the municipal elections of March 1959, when Soustelle mounted a vigorous assault on the way in which the party was run at a meeting of the central committee. His report was remarkably pessimistic about the future of the UNR, claiming that its support was eroding in every area of the country while the Communist Party was growing in popularity. He suggested that the party would take as many weeks as the RPF had taken years to dissolve away to nothing. This process of dissolution was weakening the position both of the government and of General de Gaulle. The reasons for this, according to Soustelle, were lack of resources, excessive centralisation, ineffective campaigning and, in particular, insufficient support for the cause of *Algérie Française*. He asserted that many UNR supporters had come to him to ask whether their party still believed in salvaging Algeria as a French territory. His conclusion was that many Gaullists were staying

away from the polls as a result of despair at the apparent domination of the press and of public office by those in favour of the separatists. Too many pro-independence comments, he claimed, went unanswered by the Gaullist movement.

In addition, Soustelle complained, the central committee was poorly organised. It did not meet sufficiently frequently and ministers who were members were not always able to attend. The timing of meetings had meant that they had become a burden on already busy ministers. Chalandon's ideas for the administrative procedures of the party would only slow it down further, in his view. Some form of permanent committee had to be established, the members of which would be selected from the central committee⁵⁹. This strident attack on the administration of the movement was a clear indication of Soustelle's intention to assume greater responsibility within it. In so doing, he would be in a better position to influence the government. Soustelle most certainly did not allow his loyalty to de Gaulle to prevent him from pursuing personal political goals.

Initially, Soustelle and his supporters had been satisfied with Chalandon: *Voici pourquoi*, their journal, published a photograph of him on its front page, describing him in flattering terms as “le type même de l'homme nouveau... un technicien... jeune inspecteur des finances... qui avait déjà une grande expérience des choses économiques”⁶⁰. In fact they probably did not feel threatened by him as he was due to occupy the post only until the next party congress, on the suggestion of the previous secretary

⁵⁹ Notes taken at the 11 March meeting of the central committee by a witness, cited in Charlot, *L'UNR*, pp. 48-49.

⁶⁰ *Voici Pourquoi*, 19 February 1959. *Voici Pourquoi* was strongly linked to Soustelle and all those who had participated with him in the USRAF.

general Frey, who had argued that his “apolitical” profile would cause least divisions within the UNR through its inevitably difficult early stages.

Yet it soon became clear that Chalandon's job was in fact to prevent the party from becoming dominated by Soustelle's supporters. One of Chalandon's first official acts was a visit to Algiers, accompanied by the president of the UNR parliamentary group, Lucien Neuwirth. In a speech he delivered to the Algiers branch of the UNR on 21 March, he raised the possibility of an independent Algeria:

“Il faut favoriser l'épanouissement de l'Algérie en tant que personne politique... le rôle de l'UNR est de contribuer à créer une vie politique algérienne... la maturité politique de l'Algérie devra lui permettre de choisir son destin”⁶¹.

These words would no doubt have provoked a crisis at the next meeting of the UNR central committee had not the General himself made remarkably similar declarations at his press conference the following day. This showed that the party's secretary general had been speaking with the explicit approval of the President of the Republic and it came as no surprise to learn that immediately prior to his departure for Algeria, Chalandon had in fact had a long meeting with de Gaulle. *Le courrier politique*, a UNR news bulletin, used the similarity between the two speeches to illustrate the absolute solidarity between the Gaullist party and de Gaulle:

⁶¹ *Le Monde*, 24 March 1959.

“... en écoutant le Général parler de l'Algérie, il était impossible de ne pas être frappé profondément par l'identité des vues exprimées par le Président de la République et celles que le secrétaire général de l'UNR avait expliquées vingt-quatre heures plus tôt... identité... sensible jusque dans les mots mêmes”⁶².

Such comments were all part of the movement's strategy of associating itself closely with the decisions of General de Gaulle on the Algerian question.

Further internal party conflict erupted after the senatorial elections in Algeria. The elections took place in May 1959. In Algiers, factional disputes within the UNR had led to the party's list of candidates finishing only in third place. This had infuriated Soustelle; he blamed the structure of the party, claiming in a long letter to Chalandon that “cet état de choses... conduirait rapidement notre union à une véritable dislocation”⁶³. At the same time a press campaign was launched against Chalandon in the *Journal du Parlement* and in *Voici Pourquoi*. René Saive wrote an aggressive editorial for the former publication, attacking the UNR secretary general in personal terms:

“Le secrétaire général de l'UNR, par des interventions multiples, quoique discrètes..., semble s'être donné pour mission de détruire ce que ses propres amis ont construit... on frémit... à penser que d'un tel personnage dépend, pour une large part, la réputation et l'avenir du gaullisme”⁶⁴.

⁶² *Courrier politique*, 27 March 1959.

⁶³ Unpublished letter from Jacques Soustelle to Albin Chalandon, Paris, 1 June 1959, cited in Charlot, *L'UNR*, p.52.

⁶⁴ *Journal du Parlement*, 2 June 1959.

The latter journal advanced a similar argument, complaining of Chalandon's support for "liberals" in Algiers which had destabilised the UNR's electoral efforts⁶⁵. Delbecque, meanwhile, at the departmental *assises* of the UNR of the Nord region on 21 June, also criticised the secretary general, accusing him of adopting controversial attitudes without consulting the rest of the party:

"Il est grand temps que l'on cesse à l'échelon du secrétariat national de prendre des positions sur les plans idéologiques ou politiques sans que celles-ci aient été étudiées par les instances du mouvement, y compris le comité central qui, jusqu'aux assises nationales, reste le seul organe de direction du mouvement"⁶⁶.

Only out of loyalty to General de Gaulle, he claimed, had he and Soustelle refrained from taking more direct action with regard to the UNR.

His comments were vigorously supported by further articles in the *Journal du Parlement*. One writer, whose signature was "J.P.", referred to Chalandon as "le *fürher* (ou presque)" of the UNR⁶⁷. Raymond Dronne, deputy for the Sarthe, provocatively asserted that: "Il faut 'dé-chalandonner' l'UNR". In the same edition there was an indication of the factors restraining this group from taking more direct action: one Jean-José Marchand warned that Chalandon's views on Algeria were effectively those of de Gaulle, and that if the secretary general was removed, the General would react by dissolving Parliament and thus provoke an electoral

⁶⁵ *Voici Pourquoi*, 6 June 1959.

⁶⁶ *Le Monde*, 23 June 1959.

⁶⁷ *Journal du Parlement*, 25 June 1959.

defeat for the Gaullist party⁶⁸. Although the party was not yet openly in a state of crisis, factional conflict within it had reached a significant level of intensity. Despite the party's official rhetoric of unity behind de Gaulle, internally it was witnessing a fierce battle for supremacy. Although the period of the Algerian conflict was in many ways exceptional, causing a great degree of division throughout France, it left its mark on the Gaullist party, for whom loyalty would remain a sensitive issue thereafter.

After another acrimonious meeting of the central committee on 23 June, Delbecq began an outspoken campaign to replace Chalandon as secretary general, giving an interview to *Voici pourquoi* to state what he would do if elected. Most notably, he proposed that a post of UNR president should be created; an idea which could not fail to anger de Gaulle, who preferred to avoid any possible alternative focus of authority within the Gaullist movement⁶⁹. Such a view was in clear contrast to that of Chalandon, who repeated his opinions to the Western regional federations of the UNR at a meeting at Rennes in July; he argued that the party was for de Gaulle to dispose of as he wished⁷⁰. Those who wished to force a policy decision on de Gaulle were, he argued, betraying Gaullism. He chose to ignore the fact that in the domain of economic policy, he had been attempting in his own way to force ideas upon the government. On this occasion, his agreement with the point of view of de Gaulle led him to join the ranks of those who wished to stress the need for loyalty above all.

⁶⁸ *Journal du Parlement*, 26 June 1959.

⁶⁹ *Voici Pourquoi*, 23 July 1959.

⁷⁰ *Le Monde*, 21 July 1959.

Others, however, chose to follow the advice he had given at the party's meetings and attempt to impose their own ideas.

At the National Council meeting of 26-27 July, the party attempted to present a united front and the dispute remained hidden without being resolved. De Gaulle's speech of 16 September, however, disturbed the calculations of each faction by placing the UNR, and the whole of France, in front of a radically different situation with regard to Algeria. He proposed three options for the colony: secession, "francisation" and association. The fact that he openly acknowledged the possibility of "secession" infuriated the UNR's *Algérie Française* faction, but they remained in the party in the hope of persuading it to adopt the policy they preferred, "francisation".

At the meeting of the central committee on 18 September, however, they failed to impose their views: the committee decided to issue a press release approving without reservation the latest initiative of de Gaulle and stating that it could not fail to bring about a peaceful solution to the Algerian conflict. An amendment proposed by the minority favourable to "francisation" expressing the desire of the UNR actively to urge the Algerians to adopt "en toute liberté, une solution conforme aux promesses faites en juin 1958 par le général de Gaulle aux Français musulmans", was rejected. As this same minority did not want to come into open opposition with de Gaulle for the time being, they were silenced. This dispute had clearly raised the problem of how far the party could go in expressing its own views independently of the General. On this occasion, those who wished to oppose de Gaulle lost the argument.

The dispute over the UNR's attitudes towards Algeria reached its climax at the party's first national congress. The Gaullists chose to refer to such meetings as *assises*, wishing to present themselves as an inclusive movement open to all French citizens and thus avoid vocabulary with party-political connotations. This was part of its wider strategy to present itself as an original, modern force, and to avoid presenting itself merely as a party like the others. The congress, unfortunately, was to illustrate that the UNR was as vulnerable as any other French political party to internal dissent and factional conflict. It was a creature of complexity.

On 4 November at the Elysée, de Gaulle told a number of UNR deputies that he did not wish them openly to advocate any particular position on Algeria which might restrict his freedom of action. Then in a press conference on 10 November, in a clear attempt to influence the conduct of those attending the *assises*, he publicly rejected the claim that policy should be determined on the basis of rigid declarations of principle:

“... à quoi correspondraient, à quoi pourraient aboutir des regrets sur la perspective de l'autodétermination? Quelle serait la conséquence pratique de déclarations qu'on lancerait à partir de Paris ou même à partir d'Alger, sur la solution qu'on préconise ou qu'on exige? Cette solution, elle dépendra de l'ensemble des électeurs Algériens qui voteront dans plusieurs années...”⁷¹.

⁷¹ Press conference given by General de Gaulle at the Elysée, 10 November 1959, *L'Année politique*, 1959, p. 604.

One only has to glance at de Gaulle's own writings to confirm that his view of leadership emphasised flexibility and pragmatism⁷². By the time the *assises* began, the General's position had thus become much clearer to the majority of UNR members, and Soustelle's ability to influence the future direction of the movement was consequently significantly reduced. This did not prevent him from attempting to force the congress to adopt a motion committing the Gaullist movement to absolute refusal of Algerian independence.

Immediately it began the congress was confronted by controversy over the Algerian question. A written report by Ali Mallem, a member of the central committee, distributed among the assembled journalists, suggested that contacts should be made with the FLN and openly questioned the validity of the recently elected Algerian deputies. He asserted that dialogue should begin with the most "representative" elements within the territory, not merely those whom the French government regarded as its allies. In order to produce a worthwhile settlement, those speaking on behalf of Algeria had to have the support of a majority of the population. This was not the case for the "ready-made" interlocutors currently favoured by France, who represented only themselves or those who had selected them. "A quoi bon discuter avec des créatures qu'on a créés de toutes pièces!" was his conclusion⁷³. As *L'Humanité*, the Communist daily, enthusiastically pointed out, the confusion within the Gaullist party was now on public display. These passages of Mallem's

⁷² "L'action ce sont des hommes au milieu des circonstances", (*Le fil de l'épée*, Paris 1971, p. 197). The leader has to take account of "la force des choses", a concept which he frequently repeated (*ibid.*, pp. 44, 75, 109) and of circumstances (*ibid.*, p. 125).

⁷³ *L'Humanité*, 14 November 1959 and *Le Figaro*, 14 November 1959.

report, the journal argued, “constituent autant de démentis éclatants à ce que l'UNR n'a cessé, depuis un an, de dire au sujet de la situation en Algérie”⁷⁴.

Addressing the UNR delegates, however, Mallem did not pursue the same argument. Instead, he encouraged “cette élite musulmane cachée dans l'expectative” to speak out about the future of Algeria, as well as the colony's deputies. Both groups were, he added, more reliable interlocutors for the French government than the FLN, “ceux qui tirent, violentent”⁷⁵. When the discrepancy between his written report and his spoken address was pointed out by journalists, Mallem called a press conference to dispel the confusion. Here he stated that “Il m'arrive de discuter avec moi-même,” though he did add that the condemnation of “ready-made” representatives in his written report was a reference not to the deputies and senators of Algeria but to the members of the administrative commissions designated by the government⁷⁶.

This strange incident served as an indication of the problems within the UNR and formed a prelude to the public disagreement between Soustelle and Chalandon. The latter had, in his written report to the congress, already made clear what he thought the position of the UNR should be: acceptance of the right of Algerians to determine their own future. The French administration had no right to choose what form the future of Algeria should take; that had to be the decision of the Algerians themselves. To make such a decision against the will of the

⁷⁴ *L'Humanité*, 14 November 1959.

⁷⁵ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, special edition on the Bordeaux *assises*, November 1959.

⁷⁶ *Paris-Presse*, 16 November 1959.

Algerians was to risk inciting them to do the opposite of what France wanted them to do. In addition, by issuing a statement on the future of Algeria, the Gaullist party would be untrue to itself as it would make the task of General de Gaulle more difficult⁷⁷. Soustelle protested that the Gaullist party must have its own opinion on the future of Algeria; in so doing, it was not seeking to force the President's hand, merely to express its own views, as a democratic party should. He used emotional language, claiming that the French flag, if lowered, would be replaced for many years by the flag of racism, fanaticism, intolerance and civil war⁷⁸.

Although the congress went on to ratify the official motion that had been presented to it on the subject of Algeria (the organisation of the *assises* did not permit the tabling of rival motions), the existence of opposing factions within the UNR was now undeniable. Louis Terrenoire, the president of the party's parliamentary group at the time, was disgusted. He had hoped that the Gaullist party would be immune to the kind of petty rivalries which plagued the "old" parties and which delighted journalists, but the Bordeaux *assises* eventually resembled a "circus" and could easily have produced a split:

"coups de sifflets, cris scandés, huées et applaudissements mêlés, rien ne manqua pour que se développât une tension parfois aiguë, dont on aurait pu craindre qu'elle n'aboutît à une scission"⁷⁹.

⁷⁷ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, special edition on the Bordeaux *assises*, November 1959.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ Terrenoire, *De Gaulle et l'Algérie*, p. 143.

One British weekly was similarly unimpressed, claiming that only a semblance of unity had been reached after three days of crises and shouting, of insults and fisticuffs⁸⁰. The party's journal attempted to claim that the confrontations on show at the congress illustrated the democratic nature of the movement, which remained perfectly united around its "principes essentiels". The journal did not say what these principles were⁸¹. There were too many who disagreed about the movement's principles for the journal to attempt any lasting definition. For the moment, the Gaullist party was in a state of uncertainty and flux.

Furthermore, the text of the conference motion was produced only after an intensive day's discussion among the party leaders behind closed doors. Soustelle did not succeed in persuading his colleagues to include phrases condemning "toute forme de sécession, immédiate ou à terme" or anything similar. It was unanimously ratified by a show of hands. In addition, the elections for the central committee were rigged in favour of the associates of Frey and Chalandon, though several *Algérie Française* supporters were elected.

Soustelle's faction did not have another opportunity to take control of the apparatus of the UNR. At Bordeaux, however, there had been a very real possibility of this happening. Without a clear indication of de Gaulle's view, reinforced at the *assises* through the speech of Michel Debré, the Gaullist party would undoubtedly have been hijacked by the partisans of *Algérie Française*. The potential for disagreement between de Gaulle and the Gaullist

⁸⁰ *The Economist*, 21 November 1959.

⁸¹ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 1 January 1960.

party was thus clearly revealed⁸². Some Gaullists found it difficult to oppose the government, as the party had promised to support it loyally. Yet despite its official rhetoric of unconditional support, the UNR was made up of individuals with their own views and this could not fail to produce disagreements. Gaullism did not exclude the possibility of political discussion. The fact that it was politically extremely difficult for members of the Gaullist party to oppose de Gaulle makes it all the more remarkable that many chose to do so.

The death of the UNR?

It has been argued that at the Bordeaux *assises*, the Gaullist party was definitively relegated to a subordinate position within the Gaullist movement⁸³. Since it was the most resolute of de Gaulle's supporters who had been shown to hold the strongest position within the party, it seemed that one could not claim to be a Gaullist and publicly maintain an opinion that differed from that of the President.

Certainly many passages of the *résolution générale* of the *assises* were notable for their expressions of loyalty to General de Gaulle. The UNR, it was written, recognised that it owed its success to de Gaulle's prestige. Its doctrine was based on de Gaulle's Bayeux speech of June 1946, insisting as it did on the restoration of State authority and the separation of the legislative and executive branches of government in order to improve the balance between the two. It would support de Gaulle in all the great tasks he had set himself, in particular the resolution of the

⁸² Maurice Duverger in *Le Monde*, 21 November 1959.

⁸³ Charlot, *L'UNR*, p. 100.

Algerian problem. It supported the government, “présidé avec une rare maîtrise par Michel Debré”. The phrase used to refer to the party's members in the motion was “les compagnons de l'UNR”, the phrase which had always been used to refer to the personal associates of de Gaulle during the Second World War. This emphasised the fact that party members considered themselves personally attached to the General as an individual⁸⁴.

However, although it was keen to stress its loyalty to the President and his government, the party also articulated a number of policy ideas which it felt ministers should adopt. Agriculture, the motion said, should be given more help to ensure its equality with other sectors of the economy. It also argued that the government should adopt a more relaxed attitude towards credit and reform tax structures to ensure that high productivity continued. In addition, urgent measures were needed to reduce the discrepancy between wages and prices and thus preserve the spending power of workers. The UNR was evidently not planning to remain passively obedient. It insisted that

“Dans le triple domaine économique, social et financier, l'UNR a l'ambition de revendiquer une part de plus en plus large et active de responsabilités nationales, car c'est ainsi que s'affirmera sa double vocation de parti de Gouvernement attaché à la promotion des masses”⁸⁵.

The party had to constitute a link between government and people. On issues other than those, such as Algeria, considered to

⁸⁴ “La résolution générale des Assises”, *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, special edition on the Bordeaux assises, November 1959.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

be of crucial importance for the safety of the nation, it could promote its own initiatives. At Bordeaux, Chaban-Delmas had attempted to give this division a kind of formal recognition by defining such crucial issues as the *domaine réservé*. This phrase was intended to denote all areas of policy which should be left to the Head of State alone. Although this did not reflect the reality of the governmental process, as Chapter Two has shown, it became a much-used expression in debates over the respective responsibilities of ministers and the President. It was the tension within the Gaullist party which had generated this expression. Far from being a device to ensure ultimate presidential supremacy, as some observers have argued, it was a temporary palliative designed to allow the Gaullist party some degree of independence. For outside the so-called *domaine réservé* lay significant areas of policy which Gaullists did not hesitate to discuss. The concept introduced by Chaban was remarkable not just for its codification of presidential responsibilities, but also for the degree of freedom it allowed the Gaullist party. This was the real achievement of the Gaullists at Bordeaux.

That said, this freedom was never to be used to develop any kind of ideological opposition to de Gaulle or his government. It was used, as the next section will show, to help the party develop a distinctive identity which did not require too much reference to de Gaulle but which nevertheless did not abandon his influence. This was part of the new style of politics which the Gaullists were attempting to invent; one in which parties in government were not free to withdraw their support from the administration, but were free to use their position and influence to help enact practical, reforming measures which would materially improve France's

security and prosperity. The Gaullist party never attempted to adopt an ideology which could serve as the permanent basis for all its future efforts, but to develop an identity and role for itself that would enable it to participate in the new kind of democracy instituted by the Fifth Republic.

In so doing, the Gaullist party did not intend to sacrifice its personality to the need for obedience. This was evident in another report presented to the *assises* by the treasurer of the party's parliamentary group, Michel Habib-Deloncle, concerning the UNR's role in the new Republic. When speaking of de Gaulle, the *rapporteur* struck a tone which was by now becoming familiar: "... nous devons faire en sorte, nous qui avons été créés pour soutenir son action, que jamais il ne puisse y avoir entre lui et nous la moindre divergence". The party owed its success to the equation "UNR=de Gaulle" and as a result owed him absolute loyalty: "Cette équation nous crée un devoir de fidélité inconditionnelle envers le Général, sa personne et sa politique"⁸⁶.

Yet, Habib-Deloncle continued, very much in the manner of Chalandon, absolute loyalty did not entail absolute passivity. The party had a responsibility to keep the President informed about the state of public opinion and suggest measures which could be taken. He did not consider that policy drafting was a matter for de Gaulle and the government alone. The Gaullist party also had the right to expect an important role. Once policy had been decided upon in agreement with the party, the UNR would defend it unfailingly against the opponents of Gaullism. Habib-Deloncle added that if the Gaullist party were not present on the national

⁸⁶ Michel Habib-Deloncle, "Rapport sur le rôle de l'UNR dans la Ve République", *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, special edition on the Bordeaux *assises*, November 1959.

political scene, de Gaulle would already have been obliged to return to his country residence at Colombey-les-deux-Eglises. Although he did not openly say so, this implicitly created an obligation to the Gaullist party - an obligation to listen to it and take its opinions into account⁸⁷. He had almost gone as far as to say that without the Gaullists, there could be no de Gaulle.

Habib-Deloncle, who later became vice-president of the party's parliamentary group and a member of the UNR central committee (1961-2)⁸⁸, took a similar view of the UNR's attitude towards the government. Its principal role, he argued, was to provide the support which would ensure long-term stability, in contrast to the Fourth Republican system. This did not mean that the party should never make its own proposals; on the contrary, this was to be encouraged. By undertaking such work in a spirit of co-operation and support, the disorder which had characterised the previous regime could be avoided. The most important function of the UNR was to maintain a dialogue with ministers.

“Il faut, vis-à-vis du Gouvernement, que nous ayons à coeur de lui dire, loyalement, ce que nous pensons de la qualité de son action”.

The same principle was to apply to the party's internal discussions:

⁸⁷ *ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Who's Who in France*, 1994-5, Paris 1995. He also became Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (1962-6) and for Education (1966-7).

“Au jour d'un désaccord, on discute, on s'explique, mais on se range à l'avis de la majorité et on présente à l'extérieur un front uni”⁸⁹.

There were disagreements within the party. Once they had been expressed, the view of the many should prevail. In this way, the Gaullist party could effectively represent the new kind of democracy it was trying to create. Although there was room for complexity within the party, the leadership was eager that this should not destabilise its attempt to project an image of modernity. In addition, the public displays of loyalty orchestrated by the UNR were partly a tactic to win over French opinion, which still could not have a clear idea of what the party represented beyond supporting de Gaulle. They were to show that the new Gaullist party was committed to reversing the Fourth Republic's legacy of instability.

Chalandon's speech at Bordeaux made similar points. Fidelity to de Gaulle, he argued, revisiting a now-familiar theme, was not incompatible with the affirmation of the Gaullist party's independent political personality. In fact, this affirmation was essential to good government. Those in power developed a natural tendency to isolate themselves from public opinion and regular contact with a political party prevented this from happening, since parties were more in touch with the views of ordinary people. The present administration's problems, he argued, originated in their failure to do this. Despite his affirmations of loyalty, Chalandon was not afraid to criticise a Gaullist government openly. At the Bordeaux *assises*, he had expressed his disappointment at the

⁸⁹ *ibid.*

government's isolation from its supporters: "Pourquoi le Gouvernement abuse-t-il parfois de cette solidarité qui nous lie? Pourquoi avons-nous l'impression de n'être que des robots, ou des figurants?"⁹⁰. Chaban-Delmas, president of the National Assembly, added his voice to the chorus insisting that the UNR propose its own policy ideas. "Elle doit faire en sorte que sa fidélité n'étouffe pas ses initiatives," he argued⁹¹.

The Bordeaux *assises*, then, far from representing the absolute subjugation of the UNR by de Gaulle and his government, mark the point at which the Gaullist party finally succeeded in articulating a positive role for itself. Its leaders made a genuine attempt to reconcile the maintenance of governmental stability with the need for the movement to retain its own identity. The party journal pronounced the disagreements over⁹²; indeed in a sense the party had defined a clear role for itself, but not one that would be unquestioningly supported by all, as the evidence presented in subsequent chapters suggests.

The Expulsion of Soustelle

The difficulty of maintaining a point of view opposed to that of General de Gaulle appeared to be confirmed by the Gaullist party's treatment of Soustelle after the *assises*. Debré had already written to Soustelle on 19 November 1959 that on the Algerian question, de Gaulle was eager to have the unconditional support

⁹⁰ "Le rapport d'Albin Chalandon", *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, special edition on the Bordeaux *assises*, November 1959.

⁹¹ "Le discours de Jacques Chaban-Delmas", *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, special edition on the Bordeaux *assises*, November 1959.

⁹² *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 1 January 1960, editorial.

of all the Gaullists⁹³. It was thus no great surprise when Soustelle was summoned to the Elysée on 5 February in order to be informed of his removal from the post of Minister of Information by the President of the Republic⁹⁴. The new regime placed great importance upon ministerial solidarity; Soustelle's attachment to the *Algérie Française* faction made it difficult for him to claim that he was respecting this principle.

Unfortunately for Soustelle, however, even though he was now no longer a member of the government, he was still regarded as one of the principal figures within the UNR and thus, in the eyes of Debré and others, required to observe a certain discretion in any statements concerning policy. When, therefore, he issued a declaration stating that he had been removed from office not because he had fulfilled his responsibilities inadequately, nor because of his involvement in the ill-fated Barricades Week, but because he was a supporter of *Algérie Française*, this was badly received by other UNR figures. Chaban-Delmas complained that Soustelle's argument that he had been excluded from government because he was determined to maintain French rule in Algeria implied that de Gaulle did not share this determination, which was misleading. He argued that since the UNR had been elected to support the General, its members could not be permitted to make inaccurate statements about him⁹⁵.

The expulsion of Soustelle from the Gaullist party was always a possibility from this moment onwards and, after a good deal of dispute, it was duly pronounced on 25 April 1960. The

⁹³ Soustelle, *Espérance trahie*, p.137.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 160-1.

⁹⁵ *Le Figaro*, 16 February 1960.

delay may have been due to the respect in which Soustelle was still held by important sections of the party whom the leaders did not wish to antagonise; time was taken in order to give the impression that all other possibilities were under consideration.

This affair reveals a great deal about the UNR at this time. Disagreement with de Gaulle could mean leaving the Gaullist party, even if the individual concerned had been one of the most active in campaigning for the General's return to power during the Fourth Republic, as was the case for Soustelle, the former secretary general of the RPF. Debré was unequivocal about this in his letter to Soustelle on 22 February: "L'UNR n'a de valeur, l'UNR n'a de sens, l'UNR n'a de légitimité que dans la mesure où son action épouse totalement les directives politiques du général de Gaulle"⁹⁶. He repeated similar arguments in another letter of 17 March⁹⁷, after Soustelle had published an article in the *Journal du Parlement* about Algeria⁹⁸. Describing himself as the "guardian" of the ties between the UNR and General de Gaulle, Debré argued that while he could excuse the indiscipline of an unknown party member, or that of a local official, he could not accept that a leading figure such as Soustelle repeatedly cast doubt on the fundamental principles of the UNR. Soustelle, on 21 March, replied that if the UNR was to be "une machinerie insensible", in which individual analysis was forbidden and passive obedience took the place of personal thought, it was evidently not a place for him⁹⁹. On 23 March Debré wrote again to Soustelle to explain that

⁹⁶ Soustelle, *Espérance trahie*, p. 166.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 168.

⁹⁸ *Journal du Parlement*, 11 March 1960.

⁹⁹ Soustelle, *Espérance trahie*, p. 171.

the central committee had empowered him to exclude the troublesome ex-governor general of Algeria from the UNR¹⁰⁰. He pointed out that the Gaullist movement was about to enter an extremely difficult period, and that in the coming months, only those prepared to support the General's actions without question could consider themselves to be true Gaullists. Any article by Soustelle, or an interview, which distanced him from de Gaulle's policy, would cause trouble both inside and outside the UNR and could not be tolerated.

Soustelle's departure did not result in any mass defections: with the passage of time, his position had only become weaker as it was clear that his passion for preventing Algeria gaining independence was not shared by the majority of the party. Only four deputies resigned in sympathy¹⁰¹. Ultimately the grip of the loyalists on the party machine was to be the decisive factor. *Le courrier de la nouvelle République* did not encourage the party's members to discuss the matter: its editorial on the expulsion of Soustelle stated that "Nous n'avons pas à juger une décision qui se situe au-dessus de nos problèmes quotidiens"¹⁰². This was a disappointing verdict from a publication which had done much to promote internal party discussion during the early years of the UNR; on certain issues, Gaullists could refuse to have an opinion. The dispute over Algeria left its mark in that it made some Gaullists nervous of expressing their own views. Their self-confidence was damaged. In time, however, the wounds began to heal and in the long-term, Gaullism would remember the advice

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p. 172.

¹⁰¹ Pierre Picard, Charles Béraudier, Jean Miriot and René Moatti.

¹⁰² *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 19 February 1960.

of Chalandon and the example of Soustelle and attempt to define a position for itself which was less dependent on the views of de Gaulle.

The effect of the crises on the UNR

The defections from the party as a result of disagreement with the General's Algerian policy were surprisingly limited. The tension surrounding the period was reflected in the replacement of Chalandon by the less outspoken Jacques Richard in November 1959. This move must have been made under pressure from a restless government, keen to discourage internal debate in the aftermath of the dramatic Bordeaux *assises*. In March 1961, in his report to the Strasbourg *assises* in March 1961, Richard claimed that the party had only lost approximately 100 members, "a few" deputies and local officials¹⁰³. A few more resignations were to come, but with time they provoked less interest and little trauma. Richard sent a circular to departmental party secretaries stating that resignations over Algeria were to be accepted and nothing was to be done to help these people gain readmission to the movement: "Nous n'avons pas besoin, à l'UNR, de compagnons dont la fidélité est à éclipses"¹⁰⁴. The attitude of the UNR leaders found apparent justification when the referendum of 8 January 1961 on Algeria approved de Gaulle's handling of the situation - by their vote the French people rebuffed the representatives of *Algérie Française*.

¹⁰³ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 17-23 March 1961.

¹⁰⁴ Circular issued on 8 October 1960 after the central committee meeting of the previous day, Box CD, Institut Charles de Gaulle, Paris.

The UNR had successfully negotiated the first obstacle to its political survival; remaining relatively united in the face of a complex problem about which many party members had starkly contrasting views. The experience was not lost on those who were to lead the movement through the 1960s. For very quickly Gaullism had been confronted with issues of loyalty, internal democracy, the value of debate and the place which political parties were to occupy in the "new" style of politics. These were problems which would not disappear. Evidently those within the party who maintained close links with de Gaulle were those who remained in the strongest position as far as policy was concerned. Yet the party remained ill at ease concerning its political role throughout the decade: the tensions within it were never completely resolved, and in many ways the UNR never recovered from the Algerian experience.

The aftermath of the 1959 congress led to the temporary eclipse of Chalandon's attempt to impose his own interpretation of how the Gaullist movement should conduct itself in terms of day-to-day politics. New secretary general Jacques Richard had held the same position in the RPF National Council between 1947 and 1953 and had been a member of de Gaulle's private office during 1958-9¹⁰⁵. He did not encourage an active role for the Gaullists; this enabled Prime Minister Debré to assert himself as the effective leader of the UNR and thus identify it more completely with the government. Richard's attitude to party politics is epitomised by the comments he made in his speech to the party's second *assises* at

¹⁰⁵ *Who's Who in France, 1971-2*, Paris 1972.

Strasbourg. He argued that unconditional support for de Gaulle was nothing to be ashamed of:

“L'épithète d'"inconditionnels" dont nos adversaires nous affublent volontiers n'a pas, à notre sens, ce caractère péjoratif qu'ils veulent y mettre. Bien au contraire, elle est pour nous un *certificat de gaullisme* puisque le premier devoir du gaulliste est de tout mettre en oeuvre pour aider le président de la Cinquième République et le défendre contre ses ennemis”¹⁰⁶.

In Richard's view, the Gaullists should support de Gaulle's government and not seek to influence it. This was perhaps understandable at a time when de Gaulle needed firm support in order to end the national political trauma brought about by the Algerian conflict. Many of the other political parties, such as the conservatives of the CNIP, the *Centre National des Indépendants-Paysans*, and the moderates of the MRP, the *Mouvement Républicain Populaire*, were prepared to support de Gaulle on this. Once the dilemma had been resolved by the Evian agreements of 1962, however, there was a notable increase in party activity. Domestic issues returned to the fore. Politicians of the parties of the Fourth Republic began to mobilise for the eventual removal of de Gaulle, who had fulfilled the national task for which alone they had called him back to power. The victory of de Gaulle in the referendum of October 1962 on electing the President by universal suffrage, however, followed by the victory of the Gaullists in the legislative elections of 1962, meant that they were unable to achieve this objective. Nevertheless, the climate of national political life had

¹⁰⁶ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 20 March 1961.

changed. While the Gaullist party continued to support de Gaulle, it began to realise that he would not be around for ever. The party now needed to develop its own distinctive approach to politics, even if this meant developing a degree of distance from the General. As Serge Bernstein said of his supporters: “ses fidèles... n'entendent nullement faire preuve d'une réserve désormais hors de saison”¹⁰⁷.

THE UNR-UDT, 1962-1967

After 1962 and its victory in the legislative elections the Gaullist party abandoned its policy of self-imposed restraint, seeking once again to establish its own identity and to be treated as an equal by the government. There were several main strands to this process. The most significant was the approach to politics elaborated by the party's new secretary general, Jacques Baumel. Baumel, a senator for the Seine region, was appointed by the central committee in December 1962 in a move to give the Gaullist party greater vigour after its victory in the legislative elections of that year. Although he had not been greatly involved in the RPF, he had been president of the UDSR (*Union Démocratique et Socialiste de la Résistance*) group in the second Constituent Assembly in 1946¹⁰⁸. He replaced Louis Terrenoire, who had been occupying the post temporarily while the UNR-UDT fought the 1962 elections. He in turn had replaced Roger Dusseaulx, secretary general between March 1961 and May 1962, who like Richard had been mainly concerned to keep party divisions to a minimum until

¹⁰⁷ Bernstein, *La république gaullienne*, p. 40.

¹⁰⁸ *Who's Who in France*, 1971-2, Paris 1972.

the Algerian question had been settled. It was only with the arrival of Baumel that the Gaullist party once again began the work of finding a distinctive voice. He regarded this task as an essential element of the invention of an entirely new political culture, appropriate to the new institutions of the Fifth Republic. Having created a new type of politics with the Fifth Republic, the Gaullists saw it as their duty to create a new type of language to go with it.

Between 1962 and 1967, Baumel made a number of speeches and published a large number of articles in which he argued that Gaullism represented primarily a new type of democracy. The content of his arguments rarely varied. France in the twentieth century, he argued, had had enough of traditional political ideologies. These ideologies, such as Marxism, had entered a period of irreversible decline¹⁰⁹. They bore no relation to contemporary reality¹¹⁰. French people did not want politicians endlessly to debate matters of principle, as had been the case under the Fourth Republic - such discussions were dismissed as “bavardages stériles”¹¹¹ - but to take quickly the right decisions to ensure the material prosperity of the nation. The mighty verbal battles of yesteryear were over. Efficiency was now valued more highly¹¹².

The themes articulated by Baumel, intended to give coherence to the set of policies advanced by Gaullist governments and to the identity of the Gaullist party, which as we have seen came into being as a result of a coalition of different movements.

¹⁰⁹ Speech at Bourges, reported in *La Nation*, 15 February 1965.

¹¹⁰ *La Nation*, 7 January 1965.

¹¹¹ *Notre République*, 18 October 1963.

¹¹² *La Nation*, 4 December 1963.

Yet they were also typical of much of the language adopted by Western European politicians during the 1960s, who also chose to stress modernity, the weakening of class identity and the damagingly ideological nature of politics in the past. This was true of the German SPD and particularly true of the British Labour party, which during the 1950s had come to adopt a much less ideological form of discourse than it had used in the past. In its “home policy statement” entitled *Signposts for the Sixties* accepted “by acclamation” at the Blackpool Conference of 1961, this party argued that the modernisation of Britain, rather than the achievement of socialism, should be its medium-term aim. The word “socialism” did not appear in this document at all¹¹³. While the Gaullists contrasted their own message of modernisation with the futile bickering of the “old” parties, the British Labour Party sought to present itself as a dynamic alternative to the out-of-date patrician oligarchy which was the ruling Conservative Party.

In a highly analogous way, Gaullism had also begun to speak the language of modernisation. However, Baumel's arguments obviously served a very useful party political purpose as attacks on the opposition parties. These were regularly dismissed by Gaullist propaganda as outdated remnants of a vanished era, as “les partis d'hier” or “les partis de jadis”. The ideas which motivated such parties were, it was claimed, no longer applicable in the modern world:

“Les religions politiques avec leur cortège de sectes, de chapelles, de dogmes et de rituels absurdes sont en train de mourir. Une technique politique nouvelle les remplace,

¹¹³ D. Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century*, London 1996, p. 305.

qu'exprime plus ou moins parfaitement aujourd'hui le gaullisme"¹¹⁴.

In using such language, Gaullists intended to show not simply that the opposition's ideas were wrong, but to illustrate that it was *by its very nature* unsuited to effective government. Politicians of the last regime had not adapted psychologically to the change of institutions. They were unnaturally and irredeemably obsessed with matters of theory, and unhealthily addicted to procedural propriety. As such, they could not be trusted with guiding France into the twenty-first century.

Gaullism presented a striking contrast:

"Nous ne sommes pas et nous ne pouvons pas être un parti traditionnel, mais nous sommes et nous devons être de plus en plus une formation politique moderne d'un style neuf, largement ouvert aux réalités d'aujourd'hui, ayant une politique extrêmement libérale et souple s'attachant à la solution de problèmes concrets, leur donnant des solutions pratiques, et non pas à des discussions idéologiques qui n'intéressent plus personne"¹¹⁵.

It addressed the real issues of the 1960s, which were, according to Baumel, "problèmes de gestion, de réalisations *précises*, de plans *concrets*"¹¹⁶. Rather than endlessly debating arcane ideological concepts, the Gaullist party and the government it supported set about effectively managing the economy and initiating technological advance. In a speech at Nantes, he spoke of

¹¹⁴ *La Nation*, 9 October 1964.

¹¹⁵ Speech reported in *La Nation*, 11 March 1963.

¹¹⁶ *Notre République*, 18 October 1963.

“l'UNR et les hommes de la V^e République qui préfèrent les solutions concrètes, les options claires, les décisions précises, au système des parlottes et des stratégies de café de commerce... Les problèmes sont beaucoup plus techniques que politiques... Les impératifs d'aujourd'hui sont l'efficacité, la compétence, la continuité, la responsabilité”¹¹⁷.

Gaullism's core concepts were “cohésion, modernité et efficacité”¹¹⁸. Given that the main task of governments in the contemporary era was essentially a practical one, notions such as “right-wing” and “left-wing” were irrelevant¹¹⁹; political parties would henceforth be judged only in terms of their success in improving the living conditions of the French people. To achieve this goal, management skills and technical knowledge were paramount. The ascendancy of the Gaullist party, confirmed by its electoral victories and by the public's support of de Gaulle's reform of the political system, represented the triumph of “la démocratie de gestion” over “le régime de la parole qui nous paralysait hier”¹²⁰. This was not the result of a usurpation of power, but of a natural historical development:

“Les sociétés politiques modernes sont dominées moins par les états-majors des partis que par les forces neuves de l'économie et du social. Au vieux parlementaire se substitue de plus en plus la démocratie de gestion, à la république des

¹¹⁷ *La Nation*, 1 February 1965.

¹¹⁸ Speech given by Baumel to the *assises* of the UNR-UDT Federation of the Seine, reported in *La Nation*, 28 October 1963.

¹¹⁹ See p. 116.

¹²⁰ Speech made by Baumel at Lyon, reported in *La Nation*, 10 February 1964. Cf. *La Nation*, 13 July 1964, report of a speech given to the UNR-UDT federation of the Var: “les problèmes essentiels qui se posent aujourd'hui à la France sont des problèmes de gestion et non d'idéologie”.

professeurs et des avocats le régime des techniciens, des spécialistes, des hommes de décisions..."¹²¹.

In advancing such ideas, Baumel was evidently attempting to weaken the opposition parties and draw attention to the government's achievements. Yet this was more than party positioning, or following any particular trend. In consistently outlining a set of core concepts for Gaullism, the party's general secretary was maintaining the party's sense of identity, as Chalandon had attempted to do in 1959. Chalandon had used similar language to Baumel: "(L'UNR) fait table rase des idéologies parce qu'elles sont dépassées et paralysantes, pour envisager tous les problèmes avec un esprit ouvert"¹²². In 1963 he wrote that modern political man had a greater freedom of action "parce qu'il n'y a pas d'idéologie à assumer, il y a des objectifs à atteindre"¹²³. Baumel, following Chalandon's example in a more favourable context when Algerian imperatives did not make themselves felt, provided a voice which, while neither particularly original nor precise, gave Gaullists something to identify with other than General de Gaulle. In so doing, he laid the foundations for the survival of Gaullism beyond de Gaulle's inevitable (and, many feared, imminent) departure from office. Baumel's contribution was vital and his definition of Gaullism proved to be a durable one.

Crucially, Baumel's Gaullism did not require him to make frequent reference to de Gaulle. The President figured primarily as the guarantor of political stability and State authority; a role which

¹²¹ *La Nation*, 9 October 1964.

¹²² *UNR Bulletin de presse*, 26 February 1959.

¹²³ *Notre République*, 22 November 1963.

could easily be filled by other politicians of the necessary stature. Thus Gaullism became more closely associated with a particular political party and its members. By 1967, it had clearly articulated an approach to politics capable of remaining consistent irrespective of who was the recognised national leader of the Gaullists.

The *Union démocratique du travail*

Maintaining this individuality was not a simple process. The Gaullist movement still contained many who had their own idea as to what Gaullism meant. The *Union démocratique du travail* (UDT) was one group within the party which remained committed to its own views. It consisted of left-wingers such as Louis Vallon and René Capitant who supported de Gaulle's ideas on social reform as expressed, for example, at the Algiers Forum of 14 July 1943:

“sans briser les leviers d'activité que constituent l'initiative et le légitime bénéfice, la nation saura vouloir que les richesses naturelles, le travail et la technique qui sont les trois éléments de la prospérité de tous, ne soient point exploités au profit de quelques-uns”¹²⁴.

The General's comments on the need to change the relations of production were well known and frequently made. On 18 March 1944, also at Algiers, speaking to the provisional Consultative Assembly, he added:

¹²⁴ C. de Gaulle, *Discours et messages 1, Pendant la guerre, 1940-1944*, p. 301.

“La Démocratie Française devra être une Démocratie Sociale, c'est à dire assurant organiquement à chacun le droit et la liberté de son travail, garantissant la dignité et la sécurité de tous dans un système économique tracé en vue de la mise en valeur des ressources nationales et non point au profit d'intérêts particuliers, où les grandes sources de la richesse commune appartiendront à la Nation, où la direction et le contrôle de l'Etat s'exerceront avec le concours régulier de ceux qui travaillent et de ceux qui entreprennent”¹²⁵.

Such words gave hope to the UDT, whose members were disillusioned with the left-wing parties. For Vallon, the main aim of Gaullism was to transform French society “de façon que les ouvriers puissent y avoir des racines”¹²⁶. The Gaullism of Capitant, meanwhile, derived from the fact that de Gaulle, when he established a system of direct democracy through the election of the President of the Republic by direct universal suffrage, through the use of the referendum and the right of dissolution of the Assembly, restored to the people their sovereignty, which had till then been seized by the parties in Parliament¹²⁷. Despite the conservatism of the majority of those affiliated with the UNR, the UDT remained part of the parliamentary majority as it had faith in the revolutionary spirit of the General.

The notion of participation in many ways goes right to the heart of Gaullism. De Gaulle and the Gaullists did not want to be classified as either “left-wing” or “right-wing”. They wanted to be seen as a new kind of movement, not a party formed to defend any “right-wing” or “left-wing” ideology. De Gaulle's attempt to

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 483.

¹²⁶ L. Vallon, *Le dilemme français*, Paris 1951, p. 238.

¹²⁷ *Notre République*, 11 February 1966.

articulate a new vision of economic relations, while it may not in the end have had a great impact on the policies of successive Gaullist governments in the 1960s, was an important part of the Gaullist attempt to portray itself as something quite different from other French political organisations¹²⁸. Although the notion has perhaps correctly been presented as not so very original and heavily influenced by the General's exposure to social Catholic ideas in his youth¹²⁹, it was nevertheless a useful theme in the Gaullist discourse of novelty and modernisation.

One illustration of this kind of complexity came in 1962 when, in order to counterbalance the influence of the openly conservative *Républicains Indépendants*, de Gaulle instructed Pompidou to allocate several "Gaullist" candidacies to UDT members in the November legislative elections. After their joint success in the elections, the UDT decided to join the UNR formally. There were many occasions during the decade when they had cause to regret this decision. It is interesting that Baumel chose to place such emphasis on the argument that Gaullism was neither "right-wing" nor "left-wing"¹³⁰. In doing so he was recognising that many were attracted to Gaullism for very different reasons and that there was a very real risk of disunity within the Gaullist movement. To refuse to identify Gaullism with a particular position on the political spectrum was a deliberate attempt to keep the party together. Baumel was aware of the need for the party to unite around ideas other than loyalty to de Gaulle. His message was both a reflection of the changing nature of

¹²⁸ See pp. 100, 157.

¹²⁹ Shennan, *De Gaulle*, p. 96; Touchard, *Le gaullisme*, p. 129.

¹³⁰ See p. 116.

French state and society and an attempt to provide Gaullism with an identity that would not prove exclusive.

The perhaps unlikely political alliance of the UNR and the UDT in the name of Gaullism is an indication of its complex nature. Although the UDT supported de Gaulle and his government in Parliament, it did not share a great deal of common ground with the UNR. Baumel knew this and worded his speeches carefully. Louis Vallon helped him to maintain the unity of the Gaullist movement by making declarations which echoed his comments.

“la guerre, le progrès technique ont montré à quel point l'évolution du monde se prête mal aux idéologies. En 1965, l'homme veut être pratique. Il néglige peu à peu les jeux doctrinaux”¹³¹.

Yet the UDT awaited the grand social reform that the General was expected to impose on the UNR in the same way that he had earlier imposed Algerian independence on them - by drawing his support from the people, if necessary, through a referendum¹³². This never materialised.

Unfortunately the UDT never came close to achieving its stated objectives. The only measure it could take credit for during the decade was the Vallon amendment to article 33 of the bill, made law on 12 July 1965, on worker participation in the profits resulting from self-financing. This form of participation, however, was opposed by both trade unions and employers' organisations

¹³¹ *La Nation*, 7 July 1965.

¹³² *Notre République*, 14 January 1966. Cf. Article by Louis Vallon, “Pour un référendum social”, *Notre République*, 3 December 1966.

and was not encouraged either by the government or by its parliamentary majority. Pompidou's disregard for the ideas of the UDT is well known: he once remarked that "Les gaullistes de gauche se promènent dans l'économie comme des éléphants dans un magasin de porcelaine"¹³³. In such an unfavourable political context, it is not surprising that the UDT's aspirations were frustrated. Its members did not stop believing that major social reform would eventually be enacted, however. Louis Vallon chose to believe that the inefficiency of bureaucrats, rather than ministers, was responsible for the delay in social reform:

"Ce programme, nous savons que le Premier Ministre a commencé à l'exécuter et continuera de le faire. Nous souhaiterons simplement trouver chez certains de ceux qui sont à ses côtés plus de ferveur et de conviction"¹³⁴.

Despite this lack of immediate impact, the presence of the UDT alongside the UNR reminded voters of the diversity of Gaullist ideas. They helped to suggest that Gaullism was capable of uniting people irrespective of whether they could be identified in terms of the outdated notions of right or left. In addition, its constant prompting of the government to pursue a more active social policy served as a reminder that to be a Gaullist was not to be a passive executor of the government's instructions.

Tensions between the UNR and the UDT manifested themselves at regular intervals, despite their formal unity. The UDT's bi-monthly newsletter, *Notre République*, had already been highly critical of the UNR's role in the first few years of the new

¹³³ Peyrefitte, *de Gaulle*, pp. 442-3.

¹³⁴ *Notre République*, 14 June 1963.

Republic, complaining that the UNR was basically a conservative party attempting to appropriate Gaullism for purely conservative ends¹³⁵. This kind of criticism resurfaced at various moments of social tension during the decade, such as during the miners' strike of March 1963. Already even the official party bulletin had admitted that the government's approach was misguided¹³⁶. The UDT journal went one step further, arguing that the crisis was symptomatic of the government's failure to settle the issue of wages for public-sector workers. The major shortcoming of the requisition order, in the view of the author of this editorial, was its failure to distinguish between the authority of the State and its management; while the former had to be maintained, it was not undermined by criticism of the latter. By making such an issue a matter of respect for the principle of State authority, the government prevented itself from addressing legitimate grievances, such as low pay¹³⁷.

René Capitant, writing later the same month in the journal, took the opportunity to re-affirm the objectives of the UDT:

“Le gaullisme a une doctrine sociale, mais il ne l’applique pas... notre doctrine se résume en un mot: l’association... voilà le message dont nous sommes porteurs. Mais nous donnons l’impression de l’avoir oublié depuis que nous sommes au pouvoir”¹³⁸.

¹³⁵ See for example the editorial of *Notre République*, 15 February 1961.

¹³⁶ *La Nation*, 7 March 1963: “Il est... permis de se demander si le pouvoir, au moment de prendre une décision grave, avait été bien renseigné sur l’état d’esprit de toute une région” The journal's editorial the following day was also critical.

¹³⁷ *Notre République*, 8 March 1963.

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, 29 March 1963.

In publishing such material, *Notre République* was continuing Albin Chalandon's work of defining an independent voice for Gaullism, albeit one that was at odds with the UNR. This journal was to become a vital forum for criticising government policy during the 1960s. In many ways the UDT allowed the UNR to maintain its public reputation for loyalty to de Gaulle; the party could be used as a channel for warning the government of potential discontent. This was confirmed when *Notre République* published a lengthy critique of the government's stabilisation plan, written by Albin Chalandon himself. In this article, he questioned the attempt made by Giscard d'Estaing, Minister of Economics and Finance, to control inflation by appealing to the common sense of the French people. The administration could have taken more concrete action to keep inflationary pressures in check, claimed Chalandon. For example, the plan included nothing to contain excessive salary increases. In this, the government was showing itself to be constrained by the ideological restrictions placed upon it by its liberal, non-interventionist attitudes. Chalandon was in favour of more direct control of salaries¹³⁹.

Such arguments clearly indicate the differing attitudes among Gaullists as to the proper degree of state intervention in the economy. Léo Hamon, unlike Chalandon a member of the UDT, echoed his arguments the following week, accusing the government of inertia. Now that the Algerian question had been settled, he argued, it was the government's duty to undertake vital social reforms and not content itself with competent day-to-day

¹³⁹ *Notre République*, 20 September 1963. Cf. the editorial of 8 January 1965 which demanded that the government be more ambitious and go "beyond stabilisation".

management of the economy. It had taken decisive action to resolve the question of the evolution of the country's agriculture; it should do so in other domains of the economy too¹⁴⁰. These kind of comments were to become a familiar feature of the discourse of the *gaullistes de gauche*. For in truth, while the government spoke often of social reform, it rarely took any action. One editorial of *Notre République* was entitled “Maintenant, aux actes”, indicating the impatience which many felt¹⁴¹. “Pas de gaullisme conservateur” wrote Jacques Debu-Bridel in 1964¹⁴².

Disappointment with the lack of activity in the year dubbed “l'année sociale” by the administration was much in evidence. By 1964, one Gaullist had concluded that Gaullism in the 1960s was no longer true to itself, condemning it in terms which are worth quoting at length:

“Le gaullisme, c'était le refus de subir, l'orgueil de se battre et la subordination des grands problèmes nationaux à la mission spirituelle de la France. Il est devenu la compagnie des assurances générales. Il pouvait faire passer un vent révolutionnaire sur le pays. Au lieu de cela, il l'a embourgeoisé, enrichi, vêtu de dignité, aspergé d'eau de cour. Le jour où le gaullisme soufflera sur les usines Renault et l'Université, je redeviendrai gaulliste”¹⁴³.

Such comments are another striking indication of the diversity of opinion among Gaullists and of their willingness to express their views.

¹⁴⁰ *Notre République*, 27 September 1963.

¹⁴¹ *Notre République*, 29 November 1963.

¹⁴² *Notre République*, 17 April 1964.

¹⁴³ Jules Roy in *Notre République*, 31 March 1967.

Thus it was not surprising that when Gaullism began to experience serious political difficulties, from 1967 onwards, the *gaullistes de gauche* blamed the “right-wing” policies of its leaders¹⁴⁴. The Gaullists' narrow majority after the legislative elections of March 1967 led Pompidou to refuse to submit his declaration of policy to a vote in Parliament and to use special powers to legislate by ordinance for six months on a broad range of social and economic affairs. Such action antagonised the UDT, who had argued strongly for the adoption of a profit-sharing scheme during the election campaign, even threatening to vote for a motion of censure on the government if this did not happen. Their patience was wearing thin. Discontent with Gaullist policies came to a climax during the last few years of de Gaulle's presidency, a period which witnessed a crisis of State brought about by the events of May 1968. Never had the volatility of the Gaullist party been more evident than during this period; to take account of this fact, major reforms of the party structure were undertaken.

REINVENTING THE PARTY, 1967-1969

The Legislative Elections of March 1967

Despite the party's attempts to establish a distinctive voice in the national political arena, it remained organisationally weak for much of the 1960s. After 1967, however, a concerted effort was made to strengthen the party and reintegrate it into the power

¹⁴⁴ See for example Louis Vallon in *Notre République*, 31 March 1967.

system of the majority of the Gaullists. This meant that it became much easier for the Gaullist party to speak for itself in national affairs and thus define itself on its own terms.

The parliamentary party had begun to organise itself effectively after the election victory of 1962, a process which will be discussed in the next chapter. National party organisation, however, only underwent transformation in 1967. Before that date, despite Baumel's efforts to speak for the Gaullist party, it had struggled to impose itself. It had been isolated from power owing to the fear of extremist action from militants during the Algerian period, and the uncertainty of how to deal with them. The party was most active at election time, when it prepared the candidates' handbooks and organised the election campaign. Robert Poujade, the future party secretary general, referred in a report on the party to its "incapacité d'exister"¹⁴⁵.

The narrowness of the UNR-UDT's victory in the 1967 legislative elections convinced many Gaullists that this situation should not be allowed to last. Baumel was replaced by five national secretaries, each with a separate area of responsibility¹⁴⁶, who met Prime Minister Pompidou each week at Matignon. This meeting was also attended by Roger Frey, Minister of State responsible for Relations with Parliament, and, on occasion, the presidents of the Gaullist parliamentary party: Henri Rey for the Assembly, Jacques Soufflet for the Senate. Every fortnight this meeting was followed, under the same conditions, by a meeting of

¹⁴⁵ Robert Poujade, "L'UDR: pour une formation moderne au service de la France", *La Nation*, 25 November 1967.

¹⁴⁶ Jean Charbonnel (relations with external organisations), Robert Poujade (elections), André Fanton (public relations), Jean Taittinger (treasurer) and René Tomasini (party expansion).

the new “executive committee” which had 26 members: the five national secretaries, (Pompidou, Frey, Rey, Soufflet, Debré, Chaban-Delmas), five deputies elected by the parliamentary party in the National Assembly, one senator elected by the parliamentary party in the Senate, five members of the former supreme body of the movement, the political committee, chosen by them, and four co-opted members. The aim was clear: to give the Gaullist party a direct and regular means of access to the Prime Minister, thus giving the movement the possibility of influencing governmental action, a privilege which the parliamentary party had already enjoyed for several years. In this way the Gaullist party planned to concert its activities better with those of the government and the deputies, and thus wield greater influence. The ideas of Chalandon, who had argued for close collaboration between party and government, were coming to fruition. The Gaullist party came closer to achieving a single, independent voice. At its next congress, this aim was to be fully realised.

The Lille party conference, 24-26 November 1967

The proposed changes were not unquestioningly accepted by the other Gaullists. Doubts about the reorganisation of the party had already been voiced by the prominent UDT figure René Capitant in *Notre République*. He claimed that it was primarily an operation designed to protect the position of Pompidou, carried out by him and his associates within Gaullism, and declared that he would not attend the Lille congress¹⁴⁷.

¹⁴⁷ “Nous n'irons pas à Lille”, title of article by René Capitant in *Notre République*, 7 November 1967.

Although the importance of these issues was subsequently marginalised by the absence of Capitant and his allies, the conference was united in its rejection of the proposal for a collegiate secretariat. Activists demanded the immediate and direct election by the conference of a single general secretary who could speak on equal terms with the Prime Minister. Chaban-Delmas and Frey argued in vain for the retention of the clauses they had drawn up; in the face of persistent hostility they agreed to a single general secretary, obtaining the concession that he should be chosen by the central committee¹⁴⁸. The Gaullist party thus refused to accept any dilution of its identity, which its members insisted should be expressed by a single individual. This was proof of its potential vitality when faced with governmental attempts to exercise greater control over its opinions.

The dispute over the internal democratisation of the movement illustrated the vitality of Gaullism and the degree of party identity which members had developed since 1958¹⁴⁹. Another debate at Lille further confirmed this strong sense of party patriotism; the discussion in committee over the change of the party's name. The chairman of the committee proposed that the party's name should be changed to "Union des démocrates sociaux pour la V^e République". This met with little enthusiasm: some of the militants demanded an explicit reference to Gaullism in the new title, while many more, such as Bertrand Flornoy, pleaded for the retention of the current name. "Pourquoi changer le nom d'un mouvement qui nous a unis pendant neuf ans?" he

¹⁴⁸ *Le Monde*, 27 November 1967.

¹⁴⁹ The *Républicains Indépendants*, for example, organised regular meetings through the debating clubs *Perspectives et réalités*.

argued¹⁵⁰. All of this confirms that the Lille conference was far from being the seamless Pompidolian assumption of complete control over Gaullism that it has been presented as by many commentators both at the time and since.

The *Union des démocrates pour la République*

The reorganised version of the Gaullist party differed from the UNR-UDT in many important ways. A symbolic shift was the appointment of Robert Poujade as secretary general; he had been too young to be involved in the Resistance and had begun his career in Gaullism by joining the youth movement of the RPF. This suggested that a new generation was ready to assume control of the Gaullist movement; a generation which was not tied by the same bonds of personal loyalty towards General de Gaulle. The UDR evidently intended to become a more independent movement which would become a political force in its own right, without waiting in vain for directives from above.

The increased clarity of the party structure reflected this development. It was now led by a *Bureau exécutif* with nine *ex officio* members and two associate members out of a total of 28, so that a large majority of elected members (elected by the central committee) replaced the former *Commission politique*, which, with more than 60 members, three quarters of whom were *ex officio*, was neither representative nor viable and only had the power to ratify decisions taken elsewhere. This committee had been, in effect, dominated by a group of ministers and former ministers who were automatically members, whereas the new executive

¹⁵⁰ *La Nation*, 26 November 1967.

committee only had two acting government ministers *ex officio* - the Prime Minister and another minister appointed by him, usually the Minister of State responsible for relations with Parliament. The other *ex officio* members of the executive committee were the president of the National Assembly, the president of the Gaullist parliamentary parties and all former Gaullist Prime Ministers. Instead of being, as it was before, a sort of sub-committee of the Council of Ministers, the decision-making body of the party was now elected and brought together the most prominent members of the movement, be they ministers or not. The Gaullist party thus acquired a much more powerful focus for its own initiatives and ideas¹⁵¹.

The organisation of the UDR was also strengthened by the introduction of deputy general secretaries. Jean Charbonnel, who had been Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in 1966-7, became deputy general secretary responsible for external relations and for social and economic activity, while Jean Valleix, a newly-elected deputy for Bordeaux who had been a member of mayor Chaban-Delmas's private office since 1957¹⁵², became national organisation delegate. The latter dealt with membership, with the effectiveness of the local and regional sections of the movement, the training of its officials and the organization of UDR election campaigns. One other national delegate, one Michel Herson, was appointed to deal in particular with electoral problems such as selecting candidates, electoral research and analysing results. Charbonnel was also given the job of ensuring the liaison of the UDR with outside

¹⁵¹ Statutes of the Union des démocrates pour la République, Box D, Institut Charles de Gaulle, Paris.

¹⁵² *Who's Who in France*, 1971-2, Paris 1972.

organisations, especially with the parallel organisations of the movement such as the *Clubs Ve République* and *Nouvelle Frontière* which organised conferences, *L'Université moderne*, led by Léo Hamon to support reform of the universities, the *Centre féminin d'études et d'information*, which promoted the activity of women within the Gaullist movement, and the *Union des jeunes pour le progrès*, the Gaullist youth group. This was in fact the exact equivalent of the organisation of *Républicains Indépendants* and most other contemporary political parties.

Thus relieved of the administration of the movement, the general secretary of the party was freed to concentrate on the party's official representation and its political promotion. The new Gaullist party relied less on references to de Gaulle. On the front page of the first issue of its journal carried the slogan: "Construire avec nous la France de demain"¹⁵³. Its pages were dominated throughout 1968 and 1969 by assessments of how this could best be achieved. Although de Gaulle was by no means absent from their arguments, this nevertheless represented a significant change of emphasis. The message of the Gaullist party was to be one of efficiency and modernisation, irrespective of who held the presidential office. The new version of the UDR was clearly a party which intended to have its own independent voice.

Ironically, when de Gaulle returned to Colombey in 1969, he left behind him a well-organised political party. It was no longer possible to argue, as the party founders had done in 1958, that Gaullism represented a certain kind of spirit, and that it was a movement that could not be classified as a political party. Over the

¹⁵³ *Démocrates*, April 1968.

decade it had seen itself evolve from a loose coalition of disparate interests united behind de Gaulle into an efficient electoral machine. While it was true that parties did not monopolise politics to the same extent as they had done in the past, it had not proved possible to discard them altogether. At least Gaullism could perhaps claim that it had invented a new kind of party, one that was focused on efficient government rather than ideological ambitions.

CONCLUSION

The modernisation of France, a theme which had been persistently developed by Jacques Baumel between 1962 and 1967, had now become a significant theme for Gaullism. Although the Gaullist party could not disassociate itself from de Gaulle, it had at last defined an identity and purpose which required little or no reference to the General. It was now in a position to outlive its original sponsor. This was, in part, the achievement of all of those Gaullists within the UNR, the UNR-UDT and the UDR who had recognised that the party needed to do much more than merely obey the General; men such as Albin Chalandon, who as general secretary of the movement attempted to create a more active role for Gaullism, and Jacques Baumel, who articulated a Gaullist identity which could outlast General de Gaulle.

Yet the success of the Gaullist message was also in part due to the demise of other parties of the right such as the MRP, which withered away during this decade. It had set out supporting the General, and several MRP ministers participated in the early Gaullist governments throughout the Algerian war. However, it

turned against the President after he mocked their European stance at his press conference of May 1962 and opposed de Gaulle's October 1962 revision of the constitution. This opposition did the party little credit – in the legislative elections of the same month, it lost a third of the vote it had obtained in 1958¹⁵⁴. The Gaullist message often seemed to be the only alternative to that of the left-wing parties - an impression dramatised by André Malraux when he argued that between the Communists and the Gaullists, there was nothing¹⁵⁵. It was also a message that was being communicated in other Western European countries, such as West Germany and the UK, as well as in the USA. A vision of politics which claimed to have pushed ideologies from the centre of the national stage seems to have been the most appealing to a non-Communist electorate that was increasingly urbanised and educated, as a consequence of the economic growth of this period. Modernisation and efficiency provided optimistic, future-oriented slogans.

Many in France, particularly journalists and opposition politicians, were bored by this apparently colourless discourse of good management. This should not obscure the fact that it was a development affecting several countries and that it did not make Gaullism an undemocratic phenomenon. The Gaullist party was attempting to invent a new language of politics, and it was one in which it was permitted to make a distinctive contribution to national debate - a distinctive contribution which has enabled to outlive its founder and survive, albeit in a much-modified form, to this day.

¹⁵⁴ Williams and Harrison, *Politics and Society*, p. 109.

¹⁵⁵ J. Mossuz, *André Malraux et le gaullisme*, Paris 1970, p. 229.

CHAPTER FOUR

GAULLISM AND PARLIAMENT

SUMMARY

This chapter will focus on the activities of Gaullist deputies during de Gaulle's Presidency. Such a degree of attention may at first seem strange; after all, these were people often dismissed as irrelevant by journalists and opposition politicians of the 1960s who believed that they had nothing to contribute to the politics of the era. Both opponents of Gaullism and more neutral commentators argued that the support they had promised to de Gaulle compelled them to support unquestioningly the governments of the decade, thus preventing them from exerting any pressure on government policy. This perspective, described in the present chapter, has been extremely influential on all writing on the Gaullist parliamentary party during the 1960s.

This chapter seeks to modify such an interpretation by arguing that it was primarily the radical change in political culture brought about by Gaullism and by the Fifth Republic which led to the condemnation of the Gaullist deputies. Many contemporaries were unprepared for the way in which Gaullism sought to conduct political life. The unfamiliarity of the new institutional arrangements led them to complain that these arrangements were autocratic. The Gaullist deputies were accused of being accessories to the introduction of this new autocracy - a political crime against the Republican representative tradition.

On closer examination, it becomes clear that such accusations sprang from the legacy of past Republican history. In the first place, the 1960s was a period which witnessed the decentring of the power of parliaments across Europe and in the USA. Most parliaments, in terms of the degree of influence that they could actually exert on legislation, had been in decline since well before this decade¹. Governments in many countries were adopting a more openly neo-corporatist approach to politics in which the state sought, often rather uncomfortably, to arbitrate between social organisations, interest groups, political parties and other forces. Parliament therefore lost much of its representational role.

We have already seen how President Kennedy wished decision-making to be in the hands of a few qualified experts. Similarly, in the UK and in West Germany, governments were placing greater emphasis on passing measures which would reflect the new kind of society emerging at this time. The elaboration of such measures did not take place exclusively inside Parliament. Governments were not so concerned with the healthy state or otherwise of democratic debate. In West Germany, for example, commentators complained about the phenomenon of a 'vanishing opposition'². West German chancellor Adenauer has often been described as one who believed in 'guided democracy', Germany's political history during his lifetime having taught him

¹ Wright, *Government and politics*, pp. 132-3.

² M. Fulbrook, *The Two Germanies, 1945-1990: Problems of Interpretation*, London 1992, p. 33.

the dangers of excessive freedom³. It could plausibly be argued that this was also true of de Gaulle.

Furthermore, it was not true that the Gaullist deputies had nothing to contribute to the new regime. A number of them did seek to make an impact on policy-making and political life. Many, it will be shown, had in fact gained their first experience of political life during the Fourth Republic and were not the faceless executors of de Gaulle's will described by contemporaries. In particular, they knew what it meant to attempt to reflect the concerns of constituents. This consideration must have influenced their conduct as deputies, even if they were not to exercise actual executive power.

The central priorities of many were to influence the government and to ensure their own political survival. These aims were interdependent. To survive the departure of de Gaulle, the deputies had to show that they were committed to a vision of society which did not depend entirely on him. But they also had to show that they were committed to defending the interests of their constituents, the people. In a sense they were following Baumel's example and seeking to give the party a voice. However, they did not all have the same idea of Gaullism as the party's secretary general. In fact on many occasions, such as when they were speaking about agriculture and education, their interventions were direct attacks on the rhetoric of reform and modernisation; but like him, they were keen to ensure that the Gaullist party had an identity which went beyond the statements of de Gaulle. While

³ A. Baring, "über deutsche Kanzler", *Der Monat* 21 No. 253, October 1969, p. 14; D. Patton, *Cold War Politics in Postwar Germany*, London 1999 p. 7; W. Laqueur, *Europe In Our Time*, New York 1992, p. 375.

their actual influence may have been limited, there can be no doubt that within the new conditions laid down by the Fifth Republic, they made a sincere if not always very coherent attempt to provide Gaullism with a distinctive identity. The way in which they went about this revealed much about the complexity of Gaullism. This attempt therefore perhaps deserves more recognition than it has hitherto been given.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding the activities of Gaullists in Parliament is crucial to understanding the Gaullist movement in the 1960s. For while the role of the party administrators, as examined in Chapter Three, was undoubtedly significant, the conduct of the Gaullist deputies also generated much comment during the decade. Their activities and statements, along with those of General de Gaulle, tended to dominate public perceptions of the nature of Gaullism.

The reduction in the power of Parliament was one of the most important features of the Fifth Republic. It seemed that after being excluded from the process whereby the new regime came into being, Parliament was now to be excluded altogether from political life by Gaullism. This development was explained by many with reference to the supposedly anti-parliamentary views of the General⁴. De Gaulle's long-standing disrespect for and distrust of politicians and political parties⁵ was well known; his

⁴ See for example Charles Roig, "L'évolution du parlement en 1959", in Eliane Guichard-Ayoub, Charles Roig and Jean Grange (eds.), *Etudes sur le Parlement de la Ve République*, Paris 1965, p. 121.

⁵ See for example the Bayeux speech, in which de Gaulle denounced the "rivalité des partis qui revêt chez nous un caractère fondamental, qui met toujours tout en question, et sous

use of the referendum to gain approval for his Algerian policy and then for his reform of the mode of election of the President of the Republic seemed to confirm his preference for “direct democracy”, appealing to the country beyond the elected representatives of the people. Such an argument implies that Gaullism consisted essentially of the actions of the General, while his supporters in Parliament deliberately avoided expressing themselves so that he might rule more easily alone. They accepted that their leader could do without them if he so desired.

Opposition parties never tired of denouncing the Fifth Republic as a system of “personal power”. The press and parliamentary debates were full of such accusations⁶. The Gaullist deputies were held to bear a great deal of responsibility in this deplorable development. They were seen as de Gaulle's devious accomplices in the task of destroying the position of Parliament, undermining the institution from within. The deputies' “unconditional” support ensured the triumph of the General's will. A vote for a Gaullist deputy was seen as a vote for de Gaulle, not as a vote for a democratic political party with a doctrine and programme⁷. The deputies were merely an extra weapon in the President's constitutional artillery which he could use how and when he chose. The satirical journal *Le canard enchaîné*, when it did not depict the deputies as fawning “inconditionnels”, regularly

lequel s'estompent trop souvent les intérêts supérieurs du pays” (de Gaulle, *Discours et messages*, Vol. 1, p. 8).

⁶ Communist publications and deputies were particularly fond of this theme, one good example being an article by Gérard Belloin in the *Cahiers du Communisme* in May 1962; “L'UNR, parti du grand capital et du pouvoir personnel”.

⁷ See for example François Mitterrand in *Le courrier de la Nièvre*, 1 December 1958. His views were supported by Maurice Duverger in *Le Monde*, 28 November 1958, and André Chêneboit in *Le Monde*, 2 December 1958.

referred to them as “godillots”, the General's footsoldiers, encouraging readers to think of them as pale reflections of the General's will (see Fig. 1). Such images were extremely influential in creating the notion among contemporaries that Gaullism was an authoritarian movement.

A Problem of Perspective

The change of regime should bear a large share of responsibility for the reaction of contemporaries to the behaviour of Gaullist deputies. Their proclaimed “unconditional” support for the government was often interpreted as a refusal to criticise it. In the minds of many members of the French political class, criticism of a government was coterminous with refusing to support it. A group of deputies which committed itself to supporting a government in advance could only be an unthinking one. Such differences in perspective were the source of much of the controversy which surrounded Parliament in the early years of the Fifth Republic. Moving beyond the rhetoric of political polemics about the “inconditionnels” to a closer examination of how the Gaullist deputies actually behaved, however, it soon becomes clear that a number of them did make an attempt to create a useful role for themselves. If Gaullism were to survive as a political force, it could not afford to be associated with the decline of parliamentary democracy in France and some deputies realised that it was their responsibility to ensure that this did not happen. In their view, de Gaulle was not a dictator and Gaullism was not a modern form of authoritarianism, comparable to Bonapartism. It was a movement in which, if executive power was not to be wielded by the deputies, dialogue and discussion could safely take

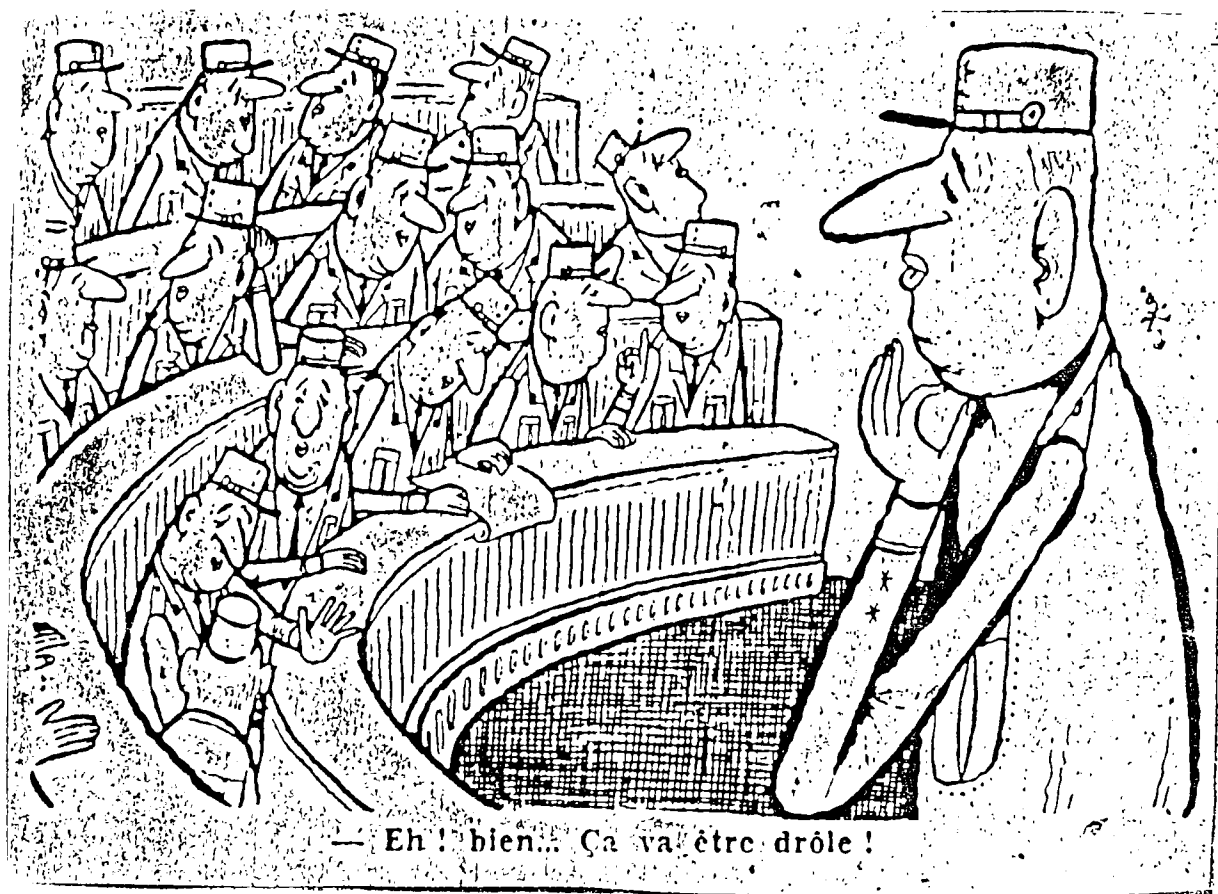


Fig. 1. The Parliament elected in 1958 in the eyes of *Le canard enchaîné*, 26 November 1958.

place. It could thus be more accurately compared to Orleanism⁸. The deputies sought actively to influence, if not to control, what Gaullist policies should be. Their attempts to do this and their public statements provide revealing information about how they thought the Gaullist movement should conduct itself.

POLITICAL BACKGROUNDS OF DEPUTIES

Before examining the ways in which Gaullists sought to influence government policy, it is immensely revealing to assess their past involvement in politics. The complex nature of Gaullism was repeatedly illustrated during the 1960s by the diversity of the arguments which Gaullist deputies advanced. They were not a homogeneous group, but an association of contrasting individuals with their own opinions. In many cases, the diverse views of the deputies on their own function in Parliament was the product of their different political backgrounds, which had brought them to Gaullism for very different reasons. The key to their involvement in Gaullism was their expectation of what Gaullist rule would achieve. It did not necessarily depend upon their personal devotion to General de Gaulle.

Previous involvement in politics

This uncertainty about the identity of the Gaullist party was reflected in the statements of its leaders. Secretary-general Albin Chalandon sought to stress the novelty of the UNR. "Nous ne sommes pas la réédition du RPF, mais un parti nouveau, avec des

⁸ An option considered by Rémond in his discussion of Gaullism in *Les droites*, pp. 318-22.

hommes nouveaux”⁹, he argued. In making this claim, he was attempting to disassociate the Gaullist party from France's recent political problems. The Fifth Republic, approved by the referendum of 28 September 1958, provided a new departure for France. It created an entirely new framework for political life, one that would ensure stable leadership and efficient government. The UNR identified itself closely with the new institutions and intended to be the party which provided this kind of government, wholly different from that experienced during the discredited Fourth Republic. This represented a revolution in French political culture. Gaullism was now represented by “new men” uncorrupted by the failings of the old parliamentary regime, and who were open to modern ideas about the economy and society¹⁰. This was an important theme of the 1958 Gaullist election campaign; the UNR had encouraged voters to eliminate altogether the political class which had failed the country. The slogan used to communicate this message was “Sortez les sortants”. Canon Kir, a centrist deputy, in the opening address to the Parliament elected that year, noted that

“le meilleur titre civique que tel ou tel candidat ait pu fréquemment exposer au jugement des électeurs était précisément de n'en avoir aucun”¹¹.

⁹ *L'Année politique*, 1959, p. 31. In an internal circular Chalandon warned against “la solution de facilité et de paresse” which consisted of baptising all former RPF UNR without looking for new members. (Secrétariat général de l'UNR, circulaire général, 30 May 1959, Box CD, Institut Charles de Gaulle, Paris).

¹⁰ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, March 1959.

¹¹ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 9 décembre 1958, p. 2.

To experienced parliamentarians such as Kir, it was a strange world indeed when those with least qualifications for public life were deemed in fact to be the best qualified. For the Gaullists, this was self-evident. Those who had participated in the previous political system had collaborated in the decline of France. De Gaulle had recognised this and had refused to participate in the regime. The Gaullist movement wished to present itself as a radically different political force and the Gaullist party leadership believed it should present itself as a “new” party run by “new men”. Jacques Baumel emphasised this message in an article published in 1964:

“Un nouveau type de citoyen naît parce qu'un nouveau type d'homme est en train de naître... Au vieux parlementarisme se substitue de plus en plus la démocratie de gestion, à la république des professeurs et des avocats le régime des techniciens, des spécialistes, des hommes de décisions”¹².

This notion came to be a vitally important component of the rhetoric of modernity which the Gaullist party leadership developed during the 1960s.

Yet in 1958 it was a perspective which many found worrying. The sudden and unexpected election of two hundred deputies who all appeared to have sworn to assent to all the General's wishes in all situations unnerved observers. Particularly disconcerting was the replacement of familiar political figures by Gaullists who were unknown quantities¹³. An article in *Paris-*

¹² *La Nation*, 9 October 1964.

¹³ Only 131 deputies from the previous Parliament survived, prompting the elections of 1958 to be described as “l'hécatombe des sortants”. (J. Chapsal and A. Lancelot, *La vie politique en France*, Paris 1979, p. 370).

Match described the new deputies as “les inconnus dans le palais” who were of widely differing pasts, ages and social origin but who shared “le sentiment d'appartenir à une société secrète longtemps méprisée: le gaullisme”¹⁴. Gaullism had been an opposition movement for many years and few knew how it would act, in practical terms, when in government. A cartoon by Pol Ferjac published at the time illustrates well the fears of many contemporaries; it depicted the UNR's election victory as a landing of paratroopers (see Fig. 2)¹⁵. The image of parachutes summoned up the notion of deputies being “parachuted” into their constituencies by party leaders and thus being imposed on the electorate from above. It appeared that de Gaulle, backed from May 1958 onwards by a clique of professional military men, had legally achieved a constitutional *coup d'état* with the active connivance of mediocrities keen for a taste of power.

Jacques Chaban-Delmas, sensing the unease created by the parliamentary dominance of the UNR, attempted to place the deputies in an historical context. Addressing the Bordeaux *assises* in 1959, he chose to stress the continuity of the Gaullist enterprise, expressing pleasure at the presence of so many familiar faces. This was a direct contradiction of Chalandon's statement. Chaban spoke of the UNR as if it were merely the most recent incarnation of a movement which had remained fundamentally the same since 18 June 1940, despite a succession of party labels¹⁶. In such a

¹⁴ J. Faran, “Les inconnus dans le Palais”, *Paris-Match*, 13 December 1958, p. 27.

¹⁵ “Une chambre qui nous tombe du ciel!” *Le canard enchaîné*, 3 December 1958.

¹⁶ “Le discours de Jacques Chaban-Delmas”, *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, special edition on Bordeaux *assises*, November 1959: “Ce qui, de prime abord, frappe, rassure, et réjouit dans cette salle... c'est la permanence du personnel gaulliste... Mis à part les jeunes, venus à nous si nombreux depuis un an, mais dont les représentants ne figurent pas ici en foule... nous retrouvons tant de visages connus qui nous permettent de remonter le cours du

UNE CHAMBRE QUI NOUS TOMBE DU CIEL !

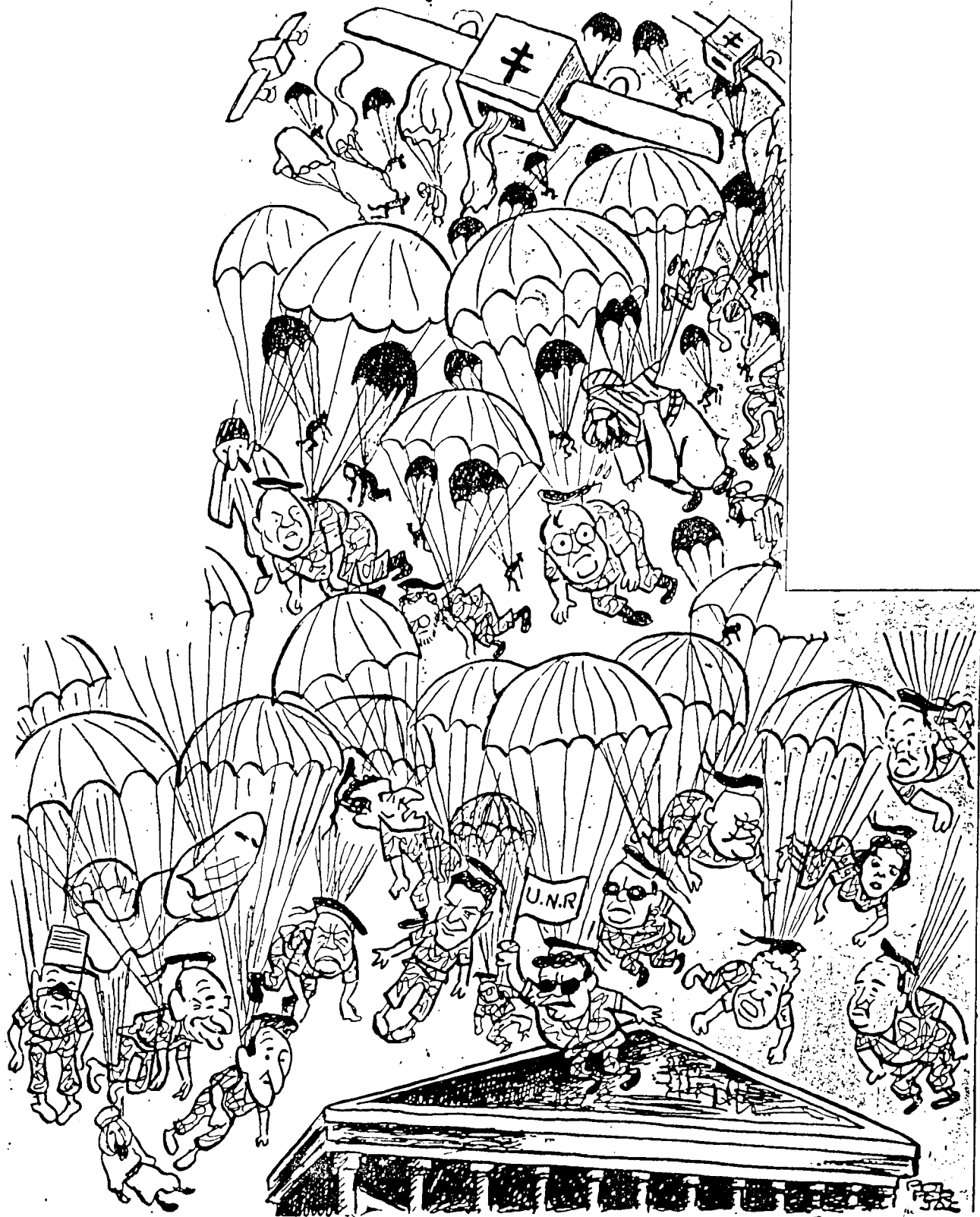


Fig. 2. The UNR's victory in the 1958 legislative elections depicted as a landing of paratroopers in *Le canard enchaîné*, 3 December 1958.

context of mistrust, it was useful to portray Gaullism as a democratic French political tradition like any other. Chaban argued that it had its own history, philosophy and above all a solid base of supporters whose time had come at last. By claiming that the Gaullists were a respectable body of opinion unjustly excluded from political life, Chaban sought to dispel the impression that they were a collection of nonentities with no previous involvement in politics and no political opinions except for a peculiarly highly-developed “culte du chef”. He thus helped to render them less intimidating and give them a recognisable place on the French political landscape. This was an opinion shared by many others involved. Marc Jacquet, one of the organisers of the November 1958 election campaign, informed prospective candidate Alain Peyrefitte that “le RPF va se reconstituer, sous le nom de l'UNR, pour soutenir le Général”¹⁷. The selection committee which interviewed Peyrefitte consisted entirely of former members of the RPF, and they mocked the young pretender for his lack of experience¹⁸.

This fundamental inconsistency of representation of the nature of the new party reveals its internal complexity. Even its leaders could not agree on the party's identity. This divergence was reflected in the composition of the Gaullist parliamentary group. On the one hand there were experienced politicians with a history of involvement in previous Gaullist movements and who had often participated in the Fourth Republic, on the other there

temps, de jalons en jalons, les républicains sociaux, le Rassemblement du peuple français, l'Union gaulliste, la résistance, la France combattante, la France libre et, enfin, pour commencement, l'Appel du 18 juin 1940...”

¹⁷ Conversation of 23 September 1958 related in Peyrefitte, *de Gaulle*, p. 25.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

were newcomers who had never stood in any kind of election before. Alain Peyrefitte's description of his first experience as a deputy is immensely revealing. On arriving at the Palais-Bourbon, he had the impression of being informally excluded from the Gaullist "club". His account is worth quoting at length; he found that the UNR representatives

"se jaugent mutuellement selon le même étalon: l'ancienneté de leur engagement aux côtés du Général et l'intransigeance de leur fidélité... Ces combattants chevronnés me regardent, au mieux comme un 'bleu' qu'il faut initier, au pis comme un intrus dont il convient de se méfier"¹⁹.

Peyrefitte was not alone in being a parliamentary novice; three quarters of the UNR deputies elected in November 1958 were entering the National Assembly for the first time²⁰ (see Fig. 3)²¹. Only nine per cent of these had sat in the last Parliament of the Fourth Republic; the remaining sixteen per cent were former deputies or senators. Furthermore, almost half (46 per cent) of the deputies had stood for election for the first time in November 1958²². These figures do appear to confirm Chalandon's claims that the Fifth Republic would be staffed by a new political class. The election of deputies with so little experience may also be explained by the difficulty of finding candidates for a new party the chances of long-term survival of which did not look particularly

¹⁹ Peyrefitte, *de Gaulle*, p. 39.

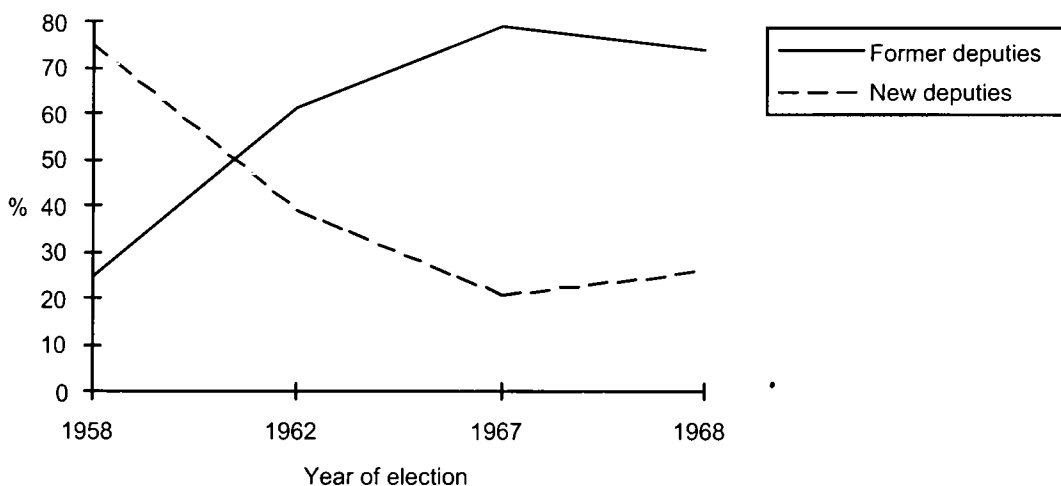
²⁰ Along with Peyrefitte, one could name André Fanton, the new deputy for the 11th *arrondissement* in Paris, Pierre Godefroy, deputy for Volognes in La Manche, and René Lacombe, deputy for Angers in the Maine-et-Loire. All were under fifty years of age and had never held public office before.

²¹ All the following calculations were based on information obtained from *Who's Who in France*, Paris 1968-72.

²² Charlot, *L'UNR*, p. 189.

promising; whatever the reason, many new faces were introduced to the Palais Bourbon²³. In the Parliament elected in 1962, the proportions changed radically: 53 per cent of incumbents kept their seats, while some former deputies who had not been elected in 1958 returned to claim the places they considered to be theirs, thus tilting the balance of “old” and “new” in favour of the old, 61 per cent against 39 per cent. The proportion of those deputies who had stood for election for the first time fell from 46 per cent to 30 per cent²⁴. This was still a substantial minority. Those who represented Gaullism in Parliament during the first nine years of the new regime were an interesting mixture of both young and old, of the inexperienced and the experienced. It is not surprising that they did not all share the same views.

Fig. 3 Parliamentary experience of Gaullist deputies



²³ “Les hasards accumulés qui ont permis à l’UNR de réunir 200 sièges n’ont aucune chance de se renouveler. Cette chambre ‘introuvable’ ne se retrouverait pas en cas de dissolution...” Maurice Duverger, “Paradoxes d’une réforme électorale”, in Association Française de Science Politique, *L’établissement de la Cinquième République, le référendum de septembre et les élections de novembre 1958*, Paris 1960, p. 240.

²⁴ Charlot, *L’UNR*, p. 189.

By 1967, only 21 per cent of Gaullist deputies had never sat in Parliament before - once Gaullism became an established force, it had less need to bring in unknown neophytes. In addition, new candidates were frequently from local branches of the party where they would often have been local councillors or even mayors, so that even if they were short of parliamentary experience, they were already involved in politics.

One example of such a deputy was Henri Blary, a property owner and HLM administrator, elected as deputy for the first time in 1967; he had been deputy Mayor of Tourcoing since 1959 and a local councillor for the same region since 1961. Pierre Cornet, a lawyer, had been a local councillor in the Ardèche since 1961 and Mayor of Villeneuve-de-Berg in the same region since 1960; he was chosen as deputy for nearby Privas in 1967. Louis-Alexis Delmas had been a colonial administrator in Guinea during the 1950s before becoming a local councillor in Aveyron in 1958 and Mayor of Salles-Curan in the same region in 1959. He was elected deputy there, representing Millan, in 1967. All were over 50 years of age when they entered the National Assembly for the first time.

It might appear anomalous that between the legislative elections of 1967 and those of 1968 the percentage of those who had never been deputies before rose to 26. This was because the elections of 1968 took place immediately after, and as a result of, the student and worker agitation of May-June that year. Their outcome was determined by provincial reaction against the perceived "extremism" behind much of the events of the preceding months. The most obvious way to prevent the return of any such events was to vote for the Gaullists, whose campaign was astutely based upon stern anti-communist rhetoric, and

whose traditional message of “us or chaos” was well adapted to the circumstances. The scale of the Gaullist victory brought younger, less experienced candidates to the Palais-Bourbon - many had stood for constituencies which the party would not normally expect to win, and benefited from the fear of the left induced by the events of May²⁵.

Some of those elected in 1968 were individuals whose involvement in Gaullism was obviously temporary, such as left-wing journalist David Rousset, who had been a co-founder of the *Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire*. He joined the Gaullists in order to contribute to the reform of the universities, seen as the major task of the coming parliamentary session. Most, however, were young party members whose promotion to the rank of deputy, as a result of the socio-political context of 1968, came somewhat earlier than expected. Party leaders had also been keen to present at least some young faces to electors, to avoid repetitions of the May accusations levelled at the Gaullist government of being old and out of touch²⁶.

On the whole, then, the Gaullist deputies grew in experience during the 1960s. After an initial influx of young candidates, the party understandably began to prefer those with experience of the new system. Furthermore, even if they had not stood for public office before, most deputies had been involved in Gaullism for

²⁵ Examples of such deputies, all of whom were under 50 years of age, had not been involved in the Resistance, the RPF or the *Républicains Sociaux* and who had never held public office before, included Robert Aymar, a journalist who was elected to represent Vizille in the Val d'Isère, Michel Bennetot, an engineer chosen as deputy for Brest in Finistère, and Claude Martin, a lawyer elected in the 10th *arrondissement* in Paris.

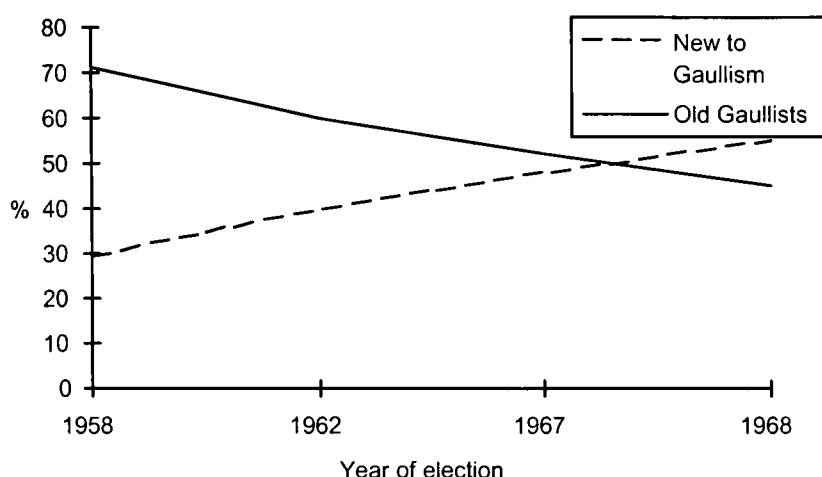
²⁶ “His [de Gaulle's] paternalism, the control he has exerted over information, the cant and pomp of his style of government, irritate and do not impress the young.” (P. Seale and M. McConville, *French Revolution 1968*, London 1968, p. 95).

many years. Chalandon's claim that the Gaullist party was composed primarily of "new men" did not always mean that such men were new to Gaullism, merely that they had a different attitude to the practice of politics and had not held high office before. Fig. 4 illustrates this fact. The renewal of personnel in 1958 was simply a result of the promotion of Gaullists who had been too young to be considered as RPF deputies²⁷. Although many had not been deputies before, 71 per cent of the parliamentary group of 1958 had been involved, in some capacity, in the Resistance and or the RPF²⁸. This figure sank to 60 per cent in the 1962 legislature, and 52 per cent in 1967. In 1968 it dropped further to 45 per cent. It thus seems that although younger candidates with little parliamentary experience were preferred in 1958, they were nevertheless drawn from within the ranks of the Gaullist movement. New candidates were only drawn to Gaullism from outside the movement once it had become a more established force on the political scene.

²⁷ Jean-Claude Dalbos, for instance, was elected in 1958 to represent Bègles, Pessac and Mérignac in the Gironde at the age of 30, after having been President of the youth section of the RPF in that region and a member of the managing committee of the *Républicains Sociaux* in the Gironde during the 1950s.

²⁸ This was the case for many prominent Gaullists of the 1960s; Jean Boinvilliers, deputy general secretary of the Gaullist party between 1961 and 1967 and editor of *La Nation* between 1962 and 1966, had never been a deputy before but had been involved in the Resistance, being awarded the *croix de guerre* and the *Médaille de la France libre* after the Liberation. André Bord, before becoming deputy for Strasbourg in 1958, had been awarded the Resistance medal, as well as the *croix de guerre* and the *Médaille militaire*. Jacques Maziol, deputy for Toulouse and eventually a minister in Pompidou's first government, had been a member of the RPF's national council and of the central committee of the *Républicains Sociaux*, as well as having been awarded the *croix de guerre*. Lucien Neuwirth, deputy for St. Etienne from 1958, had been a municipal councillor for the RPF there since 1947. He was secretary general of the UNR parliamentary group between 1959 and 1962. None of these men was over 40 years of age at the time of their election in 1958.

Fig. 4 Previous involvement of deputies in Gaullism



On the whole, after an initial recruitment of relatively young men, many of whom had no professional background in politics, the Gaullist party looked to the more traditional virtue of experience in its parliamentary candidates. This corresponds to the parliamentary party's growing assertiveness during the decade. Those who were new to the Assembly tended to be those most willing to support the government's policies; those used to parliamentary life were more ready to voice their grievances and those of their constituents. Once the group as a whole gained in experience, it became more ready to express itself irrespective of the opinions of ministers.

The "new men"

New deputies did not always represent the taking of power by a younger generation waiting to stand in for those who were prepared to retire from politics, but the accession to responsibility of a significantly different group of people with different motives, ambitions and ideas. Examination of the pasts of some deputies shows them to fit Chalandon's description of the model Gaullist as

a professional who had not held office before. Guy Rabourdin, for example, elected to Parliament for the first time in 1962 to represent the constituency of Lagny in the Seine-et-Marne, had not been involved in the Resistance or in the RPF and RS but had been director of *Les Etablissements Rabourdin* in Noisy-le-Grand since 1946. He had become Mayor of Chelles for the UNR in 1959²⁹, thus acquiring a position that enabled him to become a parliamentary candidate three years later. Arthur Moulin, also elected to the Palais Bourbon for the first time in 1962, had been a veterinary surgeon in Sains-du-Nord since 1947 with no apparent involvement in politics. Yet once he became a deputy, for the constituency of Avesnes in the Nord, he maintained, as did so many other “new Gaullists” who claimed to offer a complete break with the past, the time-honoured French practice of accumulating mandates, being elected as a *conseiller municipal* for the same area in 1965 and a *conseiller général* in 1967³⁰. To be elected to local office after becoming a deputy was a feature of the Gaullist party in the 1960s. Jean Le Gall had been a doctor at Charleville in the Ardennes since 1951 before becoming the town's deputy in 1962 at the young age of 40³¹. Paul Guillon was also a doctor, one old enough to have been in the Resistance, but who had not been involved in any political activity before representing Poitiers for the UNR in the National Assembly from 1958 to 1967³². Joel Le Theule was a young Gaullist who had passed the *agrégation* in geography before becoming a teacher at the national military

²⁹ *Who's Who in France*, 1971-2, Paris 1972.

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ *Who's Who in France*, 1967-8, Paris 1968.

³² *Who's Who in France*, 1971-2, Paris 1972.

college, St-Cyr; he had only been there for three years before being elected a deputy for Le Mans in 1958 at the age of 28³³. Pierre Bas was elected to Parliament for the first time in 1962 at the age of 37 having been a colonial administrator since 1948³⁴.

Chalandon and Baumel made much of the UNR being a party that was dynamically “open” to the active non-political elements of society, and which could offer an improved public role for those whose energy had hitherto been stifled by a moribund bureaucracy and political system; rhetoric that was translated into action by Debré's organisation of round-table meetings with leaders of industry and business. This recruitment of young professionals did not begin in 1958; those who participated in Gaullism only after 1947 without being prominent members of the Resistance were themselves “new Gaullists” at one stage, but insufficient in number to dominate the party. During the period of the RPF, defining Gaullism remained the preserve of the *gaullistes de guerre* and the so-called “barons” of Gaullism. By the time of the Fifth Republic, the balance had changed. The mixture of older Gaullists who saw Gaullism in terms of personal loyalty to the General and younger professionals who, attracted by the possibilities offered by Chalandon's and Baumel's ideas about society, aimed chiefly at the modernisation of France (modernisation in the sense of using state power to give the country a more efficient political culture and economic infrastructure), created tensions within the Gaullist parliamentary group. By the end of the decade, it would be clear that the younger deputies tended to echo Baumel's belief in dynamic pragmatism

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ *ibid.*

and efficiency, while older deputies were more concerned with protecting the interests of their constituents and opposing excessively radical changes such as the education reform of 1968-9.

More recent converts were more loyal

One might assume that it was the older Gaullists who had become involved in politics as a result of their personal connection with de Gaulle who would be the most loyal to de Gaulle's governments. Interestingly, the opposite was the case. An examination of the individual conduct of Gaullist deputies shows that those who had come to Gaullism more recently were those who were more consistent in their support. Of the thirty deputies who left the party between 1958 and 1962, mainly as a result of disagreement with de Gaulle's Algerian policy, only 17 per cent were "new" Gaullists, whereas 19 per cent were "Resistance" Gaullists, a similar proportion to the number of RPF Gaullists. Dissidence should therefore be explained not in terms of "old" and "new" but in terms of "party" Gaullists and the remainder: those deputies who had begun their Gaullist careers in the RPF or the RS were not more prone to dissidence than those who had been part of the Resistance. And after 1962, when Gaullism was a more firmly established part of the French political landscape and possessed a greatly clarified party identity, very few members of the UNR-UDT or UDR abandoned the movement. Party loyalty turned out to be a greater source of cohesion than personal loyalty to de Gaulle.

Gaullists and "les jeux du système"

The Gaullist party's denunciation of the Fourth Republic was relentless. Gaullist politicians never tired of denouncing the evils of the *ancien régime* from the clutches of which Frenchmen had so fortunately been rescued. The first issues of *Le courrier de la nouvelle République* included a history of the Fourth Republic recounted in cartoon form which emphasised the divisive role of political parties and the contribution of their squabbles to the decline of French grandeur during this period. Yet many Gaullist politicians had in fact been involved in the administration of this regime. Not all had withdrawn into Gaullian silence. This is a point which has been overlooked largely as a result of the Gaullists' insistence during the 1960s upon the novelty of their enterprise. In fact, many of those presenting themselves as “new men” in 1958 and in subsequent elections had been involved in the Fourth Republic, many as civil servants and some even as ministers.

Albin Chalandon himself had been a member of Léon Blum's private office when the latter was president of the provisional government from 1946 to 1947, and a member of the private office of René Mayer, Finance Minister from 1947 to 1948³⁵. This kind of work was often the starting point for a political career. Furthermore, this was not the limit of Gaullist involvement in the old system. Many who sat as Gaullist deputies during the 1960s were implicated in the workings of the Fourth Republic at the very highest level.

The most prominent Gaullist who had not been afraid to associate himself with the system which de Gaulle so detested and

³⁵ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, March 1959.

which the RPF had been founded to destroy was Chaban-Delmas. He had been a well-known figure in the Resistance and had joined the RPF in 1947 but refused to leave his old party, the Radicals, until he was forced to do so by the Gaullist party's decision to condemn "la double appartenance". It was his willingness to serve in Fourth Republic governments, along with his ability to persuade many of his Gaullist colleagues in parliament to support him in doing so, that brought about the dissolution of the RPF by an exasperated de Gaulle in 1953. This did not prevent Chaban from becoming (under the new label of "Républicain social") Minister of Public Works and Tourism in Mendès-France's government from 1954 to 1955. In 1956 he led a fraction of the Gaullists into an electoral pact with the Socialists and the Radicals known as the "Front Républicain", and after the elections became a Minister of State in Guy Mollet's government. When his wartime friend Félix Gaillard formed a government in 1957, the penultimate Fourth Republic administration which was to lead up to the Algerian crisis, Chaban was called in to be Defence Minister. So, one of the leading figures of Gaullism in the 1960s, and of a party which identified itself primarily with the new Republic's constitution and the propaganda of which consisted largely of vilifying the institutional arrangements which had preceded it, was in fact a prominent member of the government which led up to the administrative breakdown that for so many Gaullists represented the worst moment of France's recent history and the moment at which the Fourth Republic finally revealed itself to have irredeemably failed.

Chaban's continuing presence at the heart of Gaullism shows that it is misleading to over-emphasise the new departure which

1958 appeared to represent. Others who called themselves “Gaullists” in the 1960s had had long careers in politics, frequently representing organisations the aims of which were difficult to reconcile with those de Gaulle proclaimed as his own and as those of all who supported him: General Pierre Billotte, a left-wing Gaullist of the UDT who served in Pompidou's government as Minister for Overseas Territories from 1966 to 1968, had also been Defence Minister during the Fourth Republic, in Edgar Faure's government between 1954 and 1955. Augustin Chauvet, elected as a UDR deputy in 1967 and 1968, had sat for the *Union Démocratique et Socialiste de la Résistance* (UDSR) in the Assembly from 1956 to 1958 and for the *Centre Démocrate* from 1958 to 1967. Like many other parties, Gaullism gained some late converts. Albert Ehm, a prominent parliamentary critic of the government's attitude towards agricultural problems during the 1960s, had been an MRP senator from 1947 to 1950. Jean Fagglanelli, elected on the UDR ticket in 1967, had been a Radical-Socialist deputy for seven years during the Fourth Republic, between 1951 and 1958; during this time he had served in the administration of Bourguès-Manoury as Secretary of State for the Merchant Navy in 1957. Christian Fouchet, de Gaulle's Minister of Education from 1962 to 1967, had, like Chaban, joined Mendes-France's government, as Minister for Moroccan and Tunisian Affairs. Georges Gorse, elected in 1967, had sat as a Socialist deputy in Parliament between 1945 and 1951, during which time he was also Under-Secretary of State for Muslims in Léon Blum's government in 1946 and Under-Secretary

of State for Overseas Territories in Georges Bidault's government in 1949³⁶.

There are many more examples of members of Gaullist governments who, however limited their involvement, had agreed to participate in the political process against which 1960s Gaullist propaganda railed so violently. One of the most prominent politicians of the Fourth Republic, Edgar Faure, was eventually entrusted with one of the most important pieces of legislation introduced by a Gaullist government: the Higher Education Act of 1968. Few had more political experience than Faure: a deputy since 1946, he had been Secretary of State for Finance and then the Minister for the Budget (1949-50-51), Minister of Justice in René Pleven's government (August 1951), President of the Council of Ministers and Finance Minister (20 January-29 February 1952), President of the National Assembly Foreign Affairs Committee (1952-3), Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs in Joseph Laniel's government (28 June 1953) and in Pierre Mendès-France's government (19 June 1954), Minister for Foreign Affairs in Mendès-France's government (20 January-5 February 1955), President of the *Conseil des Ministres* (23 February 1955-24 January 1956) and Pflimlin's Finance Minister (14-31 May 1958) before becoming a Senator in 1959 and joining Pompidou's government in 1966 as Agriculture Minister. Few had held as many posts and served so many different politicians. Faure's record is a measure of the gulf between Gaullism's official rhetoric of initiating a clean break with the past and the political reality which meant that it

³⁶ *Who's Who in France*, 1971-2, Paris 1972.

was necessary to invite those directly involved in that past to become ministers in a Gaullist government.

The UNR's commitment to governmental stability did not mean it agreed to forsake criticism of government altogether. Many Gaullist deputies had become familiar with parliamentary affairs during the old Republic and must have intended to put this experience to good use by making an active contribution to political life. Along with those younger deputies who were primarily concerned to contribute to national efficiency, the experienced deputies made the Gaullist parliamentary party into a force which, if it could not exert direct influence on policy, could at least contribute to debate and give Gaullism a distinctive voice. The way in which they attempted to do this will be the subject of the next sections. The Gaullist parliamentary party was rarely united in its views, but most deputies shared a desire to contribute to political life. The way in which they did so reveals a great deal about the complexity of Gaullism. The diversity of the Gaullist parliamentary party produced a great variety of opinion as to what Gaullist policies should be. No stable definition of Gaullism emerged from these competing points of view, but in seeking to contribute to Gaullist policies, the deputies did indicate that they believed themselves to be an important part of the governing process.

THE EARLY YEARS OF THE FIFTH REPUBLIC

The Gaullist deputies and the Algerian Problem, 1958 - 1962

As seen in the previous chapter, the Algerian question caused divisions within the Gaullist party at the very highest level.

It is not surprising that in the National Assembly, the situation was particularly uncertain. Tensions in the Chamber were especially acute because the eventual success or failure of de Gaulle's Algerian policy would be determined by whether it could command a majority in Parliament. Contemporary observers thus closely monitored developments there.

Given much of the initial reaction to the arrival of the Gaullist deputies in 1958, one might have expected the years between 1958 and 1962 to be characterised by a certain degree of docility to de Gaulle's policy on Algeria. In fact this turned out not to be the case. As seen, many of those with a long history of support for the General tended to be the most hostile to the approach of the Gaullist government during this period. This illustrated that loyalty to a particular political figure did not preclude criticism of their initiatives. It also indicated, however, the bitter division caused throughout French society by the Algerian conflict. This exceptional episode was a problem which created tensions across France, not just within the Gaullist party. When its leaders had been members of the government at the end of the Fourth Republic, for example, the Socialist party had been divided by the conduct of the Algerian war much as the war in Indochina later divided President Johnson's Democrats in the USA. Many saw the party's role in the war as undermining everything it stood for, one member, André Philip, publishing a damning book called *Le socialisme trahi*. Communist dissidents, meanwhile, deplored their party's timidity in opposing the war, which seemed to be determined by their unwillingness to break ranks with the Socialists and thus lose the chance of entering

government³⁷. It was not just the Gaullists who struggled to maintain party unity.

A clear indication that the Gaullist deputies could not be expected always to do exactly as they were told came as soon as they arrived at the Palais Bourbon. One of the Assembly's first tasks was to elect its President for the coming session. De Gaulle had made known his preference for the experienced non-Gaullist conservative leader Paul Reynaud. Jacques Chaban-Delmas, however, one of the founder members of the UNR, also decided to be a candidate and the vast majority of Gaullist deputies decided to support him. It was a post which he was to occupy throughout the decade. His election was a striking demonstration of the unity and distinctive identity of the parliamentary party in the face of an attempt to dictate its conduct. Choosing Chaban-Delmas also provided a useful focus for future Gaullist criticism of the administration. By virtue of the impartiality implied by his position, the President of the National Assembly could, during the course of the decade, criticise the behaviour of ministers towards Parliament without tarnishing the deputies' reputation for being the government's loyal supporters. He was a useful safety valve. In 1961, for example, he pointedly remarked that Parliament must not be reduced to a rubber stamp:

“L'Assemblée n'est plus omnipotente: elle l'admet mais elle ne saurait se contenter de devenir une simple chambre d'enregistrement.”

³⁷ J. Talbott, *The War Without a Name*, Boston 1980, pp. 73-7.

He added that the new regime was still not functioning satisfactorily:

“il semblait à l'orée de la présente session que le fonctionnement du régime devait, en dépit de d'événements et de pouvoirs exceptionnels, s'acheminer vers un équilibre stable. Il n'en a pas été ainsi...”³⁸.

The election of Chaban-Delmas showed that the “compagnons” were keen to illustrate that they were not unconditional in their support for the government. The supposedly faithful followers of de Gaulle had already ignored the General's refusal to allow his name to be used, even in the form of an adjective, during the election campaign, and had presented themselves forcefully as his supporters. Peyrefitte has indicated how the implications of their gesture were lost on the journalists of the period:

“... à peine élus, ils bafouent sa deuxième consigne, en écrasant Paul Reynaud, son candidat. La presse les traite pourtant de 'godillots'...”³⁹.

The Gaullist deputies, because of their proclaimed support for de Gaulle, were seen as unconditionally obedient, whereas in fact they had just provided a remarkable illustration of their independence. This tension between support for de Gaulle and his government and the need to retain an independent voice in

³⁸ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 15 July 1961.

³⁹ Peyrefitte, *de Gaulle*, p. 40.

parliamentary affairs, resurfaced continually during the 1960s. It was at its most pronounced during the Algerian crisis.

At the Palais Bourbon on 19 September 1959, three days after de Gaulle's speech on the future of Algeria, the *Rassemblement pour l'Algérie Française* (RAF) was formed. Its first press release was extremely hostile towards the process of self-determination the General had defined; it was thus a matter of concern when UNR members Jean-Baptiste Biaggi, a lawyer who represented the 13th *arrondissement* in Paris, and Pierre Battesti, who had worked closely with Michel Debré on the journal *Le courrier de la colère* in 1957⁴⁰, decided to join the group. In so doing they were no doubt exercising their right to defend their personal opinion on Algeria which had been agreed at the central committee meeting of the previous day. Unfortunately for them, the *bureau politique* of the UNR declared on 21 September that no member of the Gaullist party could simultaneously belong to more than one political organisation. Biaggi and Battesti were summoned before the *bureau* and informed that they could either resign from the RAF or from the UNR. This decision was ratified by the party's central committee on 29 September, which also issued a communiqué declaring its intention to “soutenir inconditionnellement la politique algérienne du général de Gaulle telle qu'il l'a définie dans sa déclaration du 16 septembre”, and the two resigned from the RAF soon afterwards. The importance to them of maintaining Algeria as part of France, however, had been clearly demonstrated.

⁴⁰ *Who's Who in France 1971-2*, Paris 1972.

This was not to be the last time that the Algerian question created divisions among Gaullist deputies. In an interview with *Le Figaro* on 12 October, the day before the opening of Parliament's autumn session, Albin Chalandon underlined the rift within the UNR by openly criticising those Gaullists most closely associated with the events of 13 May⁴¹. On 13 October, at the meeting in the *salle Colbert* which had been intended as an occasion for the deputies to listen to the arguments of those who were to speak in the debate in the chamber and designate a spokesman for the group, those UNR deputies in favour of *Algérie Française* tried to force the party to commit itself to an unconditional refusal of Algerian independence. Roger Souchal, a lawyer newly elected to the Assembly in 1958,⁴² proposed a motion deliberately designed to relaunch controversy over the UNR's position:

“Le groupe UNR maintient son attachement à la politique algérienne du général de Gaulle et, dans le cadre du discours du 16 septembre qu'il approuve sans réserve, décide d'ouvrir la campagne et de se mobiliser pour faire triompher la seule solution humaine possible: la francisation”⁴³.

The president of the UNR's parliamentary group, Louis Terrenoire, had great difficulty maintaining order on this occasion - he argued that the deputies were not supposed to be debating policy but choosing their parliamentary spokesmen. Another deputy, René Moatti, an Algerian-born former member of

⁴¹ “... Sans doute y a-t-il chez nous des gens qui se sentent mal à l'aise... ne serait-ce parce qu'ils ont pris, le 13 mai, à Alger, des engagements solennels qui limitent leur liberté d'agir...” *Le Figaro*, 12 October 1959.

⁴² *Who's Who in France*, 1971-2, Paris 1972.

⁴³ *Le Monde*, 15 October 1959.

Soustelle's private office who had been an RPF deputy between 1951 and 1955⁴⁴, replied from the floor that before the group designated its representatives it would like to hear what each actually proposed to say. Debate was thus both necessary and inevitable. Terrenoire pointed out that deputies were not entitled to question policy decisions made by the central committee (which on 18 September left the solution to de Gaulle⁴⁵), but Bernard Le Douarec, a deputy for the Loire-Atlantique, responded by reminding him that the rules allowed for the resolution of conflicts between the central committee and the parliamentary group. Four deputies then all made speeches in favour of integration. Others reacted strongly against this, creating a general impression of anarchy. Terrenoire tried to suspend the meeting, claiming that as Souchal's proposition was not on the agenda, he had to consult the party's *bureau politique* before agreeing to debate it. Moatti found this manoeuvre totally unacceptable and demanded a vote of no confidence in the president. Three quarters of the UNR deputies refused to leave the room. Jean-Baptiste Biaggi excitedly exclaimed: "Je suis majoritaire, c'est la première fois que cela m'arrive. S'il y a scission, c'est nous qui restons"⁴⁶.

It was left to Roger Frey, Minister of Information, to defuse the situation. He suggested that the deputies wait until they had heard the views of Prime Minister Debré; an appointment for an audience with him was thus made for the following day. Some demanded that he should speak straight away but most were satisfied. Debré, a popular figure, succeeded in calming the group,

⁴⁴ *Who's Who in France*, 1971-2, Paris 1972.

⁴⁵ Charlot, *L'UNR*, p. 62.

⁴⁶ Terrenoire, *De Gaulle et l'Algérie*, pp. 134-6.

encouraging the deputies to wait for their chance to debate the issue at the Bordeaux *assises* the following month. Léon Delbecque, former head of the *Convention Républicaine* which had been one of the founding groups of the UNR in 1958 and now a member of the party's central committee, later said that few dared question the Prime Minister as it was abundantly clear that "... cette proposition était dictée par qui nous savons"⁴⁷. Immediately afterwards, Terrenoire met with the *bureau politique* and it was decided that only one orator per subject should speak on behalf of the party. Jean Foyer was thus designated to speak on the Community, Alain Peyrefitte on foreign policy, Hassen Gouled on the colonies, Louis Terrenoire himself on Algeria. No other deputy was to be allowed to speak (a motion opposed by only three members of the *bureau politique*). This was accepted by the parliamentary group soon afterwards, with only thirteen deputies voting against.

But on 14 October nine deputies resigned from the UNR, finally convinced that their views would never be heard⁴⁸. One of those who resigned, Léon Delbecque, was persuaded by his political friends such as Soustelle to apply for readmission to the party along with three others⁴⁹, but the *bureau politique* refused their application and they found themselves completely isolated. Their gesture even gave the impression that there were no more than nine *Algérie Française* sympathisers in the whole of the Gaullist party. Thus in just two days the candidate of this

⁴⁷ Léon Delbecque, confidential letter of 23 October 1959, cited in Charlot, *L'UNR*, p. 85.

⁴⁸ Pascal Arrighi, Pierre Battesti, Jean-Baptiste Biaggi, Georges Brice, René Cathala, Léon Delbecque, Yvon Grasset, Roger Souchal, and Colonel Thomazo.

⁴⁹ Grasset, Cathala and Brice.

tendency within the UNR for secretary general of the party was eliminated altogether from the power struggle. Once more, those choosing not to choose a policy for Algeria found themselves in the strongest position.

This conflict illustrated the problems the government had in securing support for its most important policy decisions among the deputies who were apparently committed to unqualified support. It was clear from the very inception of the Fifth Republic that the Gaullist deputies did not intend to accept passively all presidential or ministerial decisions. This was not part of their understanding of Gaullism. The Gaullist parliamentary party was a group of diverse individuals with contrasting priorities. They had become involved in Gaullism for their own reasons, and many were at least as concerned to secure Algeria's future as part of France as they were to support de Gaulle.

Party organisation

In part, the dispute over the direction of Algerian policy was a reflection of the resentment which had developed within the parliamentary group concerning the rigidly hierarchical nature of the party organisation. This resentment also boiled over in the form of a debate over the party's statutes and rules.

On 19 June 1959, a working group headed by Colonel Thomazo proposed to the parliamentary group a new organisation of the party which was designed to reduce the excessive authority wielded by the president of the group over the deputies and by the secretary general over the party. The description of the motives behind the proposed reform gave the impression that its authors felt the new Gaullist party to be a failure: "Depuis les

élections du 30 novembre 1958, il n'est pas exagéré de dire que l'UNR n'a pas été en mesure de répondre à la confiance que le pays lui a témoignée." This was caused by the lack of a definition of the precise links between the government and the majority and the position within the majority of the UNR.

"... Il est incontestable qu'en tant que première formation politique du pays, c'est à l'UNR qu'incombe la responsabilité de définir d'abord sa propre mission et d'assigner ensuite à la majorité la place qu'elle doit occuper dans le fonctionnement des nouvelles institutions"⁵⁰.

To accomplish this, the party needed a more effective *bureau politique* to determine the party line on all important matters. This was to have five members: the secretary general of the UNR, one member chosen by the central committee, two by the parliamentary group and one by the Senate's group, all by secret ballot, with an absolute majority needed after two rounds of voting. The reform was thus designed to subordinate the parliamentary group's *bureau politique* to a political commission emanating from both parliamentarians and party members and containing neither the president of the group nor any government representative⁵¹. Although it was not eventually adopted, the project proved extremely popular among the deputies, representing as it did a clear attempt to give them a greater say in the running of the party's affairs. This was not the conduct of men who were prepared meekly to accept instructions from above.

⁵⁰ Charlot, *L'UNR*, p. 96.

⁵¹ *ibid.*

Some deputies were eager to take greater control of their own affairs.

The parliamentary party's *journées parlementaires*, held at Arcachon between 22 and 24 September 1960, saw a complete alteration of the group's organisation and another conflict between the different factions among the deputies. André Vidal, deputy for the Tarn, revived the Thomazo scheme, which was rejected by the deputies who refused to allow their president to become responsible not to them but to a vaguely-defined political commission. The group's *bureau* was enlarged to twenty members, not including those who sat by right, plus a president and a vice-president. The president's powers were reinforced by the suppression of seven of the eight vice-presidential posts, and of that of secretary general. The reform of Arcachon thus represented a defeat for those who sought a greater independence from the government for the leaders of the parliamentary group. Not all wished to take that risk.

Conflicts nevertheless occurred. In October 1960, in the first elections organised according to the new rules, there were two distinct camps; first, that of Michel Habib-Deloncle, former treasurer of the party's parliamentary group. This included those deputies such as newly-elected Pierre Dumas, mayor of and deputy for the town of Chambéry in the Savoy region, and Jacques Maziol, a member of the National Council of the RPF between 1947 and 1952 and now vice-president of the UNR parliamentary group. They favoured unconditional support for the government. The second camp, that of Raymond Schmittlein, president of the UNR parliamentary group at this time (he held this post until 1962, when he became vice-president of the Assembly, and

occupied that position until 1965) and including Paul Guillon, deputy for Poitiers, and André Vidal, deputy for Castres⁵². These deputies wanted to assert the identity of the Gaullist party and hoped to elect a *bureau politique* which could effectively perform this task. The eventual results were indecisive, members from both sides being elected⁵³.

Relations between the parliamentary party and the government

In a speech at the next *journées parlementaires*, held at Ajaccio between 7 and 10 February 1961, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, president of the National Assembly, attempted to chart the achievements of the UNR, two and a half years after its foundation. In his view, the leaders of the movement had enabled the UNR to fulfil “un rôle essentiel et déterminant... ne serait-ce que par l'action de son groupe parlementaire”. But its dynamic, he argued, had often been halted by “les drames que vous connaissez, celui de l'Algérie et d'autres qui lui étaient intérieurs”. Most energy had been diverted into appeasing the malcontents and as a result the Bordeaux congress of November 1959 “au lieu d'être le congrès du grand départ... a été celui du piétinement”. Now, after the referendum victory of 8 January 1961, he hoped that the party would be able to “take off” (“il ne faut pas manquer une nouvelle fois le signal du démarrage”)⁵⁴. This was a clear admission of the disagreements within the Gaullist party. Despite the UNR's official rhetoric of unity in support of General de

⁵² *Who's Who in France 1971-2*, Paris 1972.

⁵³ Charlot, *L'UNR*, p. 98.

⁵⁴ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 17-23 February 1961.

Gaulle, party leaders such as Chaban made no attempt to deny its inner complexity.

In his speech at Ajaccio, Chaban had encouraged the party to use the upcoming Strasbourg *assises*, in March 1961, as a springboard to assuming a more active role. He had called upon the UNR to develop its ideas on the economy, and show “qu'elle peut apporter au général de Gaulle autre chose que sa fidélité et son soutien, qu'elle sait aussi définir des objectifs de doctrine économique et sociale”. Sure enough, there were signs that some deputies attempted to do this. Although in *Le courrier de la nouvelle République* the Gaullist journalist Léo Huret mocked those who claimed that the party was somehow fundamentally at odds with the government and that ministers were unwelcome at Strasbourg, the statements made there illustrate the UNR's determination to retain an independent voice on all those issues which lay outside the *domaine réservé*⁵⁵. Raymond Schmittlein declared that if the social and economic programme elaborated by the UNR was ignored, the deputies would refuse to approve the budget⁵⁶.

L'Aurore was one of the few newspapers to take note of the conflict between the deputies and the government they were supposed to support:

“Depuis quelques mois, autour de MM. Schmittlein, Bégué, Vidal et l'abbé Viallet se groupent une soixantaine de députés qui accusent la direction du mouvement de réduire le groupe parlementaire à un rôle insignifiant, de ne tenir compte que rarement de ses aspirations, pas plus que de

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Le Monde*, 12 February 1961.

celles du Parlement. Un manifeste a été élaboré. Il est encore confidentiel mais porte déjà cinquante-quatre signatures”⁵⁷.

Although this project eventually came to nothing, it was clear that some deputies were unhappy with the subordinate role which ministers expected them to assume. Although there were not enough of them for their opinion to become the voice that defined Gaullism, the fact that they did make their point did at least suggest that there was some debate in the Gaullist party.

Gaullist ministers were extremely wary of the troublesome potential of the parliamentary party and thus continually emphasised that the first duty of a loyal Gaullist was to support de Gaulle's government. Michel Habib-Deloncle argued at the Asnières *Journées d'information parlementaire* of 14-15 April 1959 that the deputies should be proud to assume responsibility for the government's work and take it as the general basis for their campaigns to be re-elected, rather than trying to disassociate themselves from minor details:

“... Il doit y avoir à l'Union un respect du gouvernement en tant que tel par réaction contre la Quatrième République qui a dénaturé ce principe”⁵⁸.

This was useful support for Prime Minister Debré, who gave the concluding speech at the meeting. He argued that if deputies were voting for the government, they should not openly criticise it:

⁵⁷ *L'Aurore*, 14 February 1961.

⁵⁸ Michel Habib-Deloncle, “Rapport sur le parlementaire de l'Union”, *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 17-23 February 1961.

“... Il est indispensable à la vie parlementaire... que les formations qui soutiennent le gouvernement ne se livrent pas au jeu qui consiste à prononcer un discours 'contre' pour ensuite voter 'pour'”⁵⁹.

Unfortunately for ministers, several deputies did not intend to do as they were told. Most group *rapporteurs* at the *journées d'information* defended the right of the parliamentary group to assert its independence from the executive. Joel Le Theule complained that it was the UNR deputies who had to bear the brunt of criticism of the government from opposition spokesmen, without being associated with the decisions which gave rise to such criticism; he proposed that the UNR should elaborate a clear programme of reform and openly show that it was not subordinate to the will of the government⁶⁰. Bertrand Flornoy, in his report on “les partis politiques classiques et l'Union”, deemed it essential that the UNR should have its own approach in order to remain free of domination by the executive⁶¹.

The meetings of the *journées d'études parlementaires* (as they came to be known) provided a valuable opportunity for the parliamentary party to assert itself. The *journées d'information* mentioned above were organised by the party administration to help the parliamentary party define its objectives: They were intended to consist of instructions from the party leadership rather than discussions among the deputies. The first *journées d'études*, held at Arcachon, by contrast, were organised by and for the parliamentary group, which decided on a reform of its statutes “en

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ Joel Le Theule, “Rapport sur l'opinion publique et ses lignes de force”, *UNR Bulletin de presse*, special edition, 15 May 1959.

⁶¹ Bertrand Flornoy, “Rapport sur les partis politiques classiques et l'Union”, *ibid.*

pleine souveraineté”⁶² and launched the vague but widely noticed slogan: “1961, année sociale”. In this way they maintained a separate voice, articulated independently of government influence.

Raymond Schmittlein clearly pointed out the aim of the study days:

“Par définition, la réunion du groupe n'est pas un congrès. Elle n'a ni la prétention de se substituer à des assises, ni même de les préparer. Elle est fixée sur le travail parlementaire, ce qui ne l'empêche pas de définir certains objectifs politiques”⁶³.

Reports were presented and discussed, motions adopted, and there were even statements of policy. Such activity illustrated the deputies' desire to ensure that their voices were heard. This made the government nervous and from the meeting at Beaulieu-sur-Mer in September 1963 onwards, ministers were present.

Although this could lead to the deputies having more direct contact with the government, it could also give the impression that the *journées* had been brought under official control and made into more of a party rally. They gradually became focused around much-publicised addresses by Georges Pompidou, who would rehearse the familiar themes of Gaullist propaganda.

Yet there were other meetings at which deputies could express their grievances to the government. At the first National Council meeting on 25 July 1959, Marius Durbet, a deputy for the

⁶² *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 30 September 1960.

⁶³ Raymond Schmittlein, “Le colloque parlementaire UNR d'Ajaccio”, in *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 10-16 February 1963.

Nièvre, supported by Jean Vanier, a deputy for the Isère, made a speech remarkably critical of the government. He accused ministers of neglecting the hapless individuals who enabled them to carry out its projects but who had to face all the criticism for it without a word of recognition or encouragement from those in power. His description of what it was like to be a Gaullist deputy is worth quoting at length:

“... Nous sommes donc devant vous, princes qui nous gouvernent⁶⁴, 220 sujets fidèles, plus pas mal de sujets de mécontentement. Nous n'avons plus confiance pour la raison que vous semblez nous avoir retiré la vôtre. A voir votre comportement, vos seules attitudes fuyantes, nous avons l'impression d'encombrer votre carrière. Une vie séparée, retranchée, nous prive de toute information et de toute communication, ce qui nous place horriblement en porte-à-faux devant l'opinion publique où, de plus en plus, s'accrédite l'idée que l'UNR est moins que rien.”

Durbet was particularly angered by the continuing presence of non-Gaullists such as André Boulloche, Pierre Sudreau, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Antoine Pinay in the government which the UNR was expected to support⁶⁵. This was a problem to which party secretary general Albin Chalandon had already drawn attention, as seen in the previous chapter; the strength of feeling it aroused illustrated that despite its recent origins, the UNR had already developed a strong sense of party identity. Many felt that it deserved to be rewarded for its support with more government

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⁶⁴ A sarcastic reference to Debré's book *Ces princes qui nous gouvernent*, (Paris 1957) castigating the political class of the Fourth Republic.

⁶⁵ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, August-September 1959, and *UNR Bulletin de presse*, special edition on Conseil National, 25-26 July 1959.

posts. The support of the party in Parliament could not be taken for granted. It is also noteworthy that both Durbet and Vanier were deputies in regions with strong left-wing traditions; they thus perhaps felt vulnerable to attacks from opposition politicians seeking to portray them as inadequate deputies and were seeking to show that they believed they had a contribution to make to political life. Pressure from constituency opinion must have played a part in determining how the Gaullists behaved in parliament.

Louis Terrenoire, president of the parliamentary group, echoed these concerns, bemoaning the lack of communication between government and Parliament:

“Puisqu'on a voulu que le gouvernement soit responsable devant le Parlement, il faut un lien quasi organique entre le gouvernement et le Parlement de manière à ce que ne se reproduisent pas ces incompréhensions sur lesquelles on a très justement, hier, attiré votre attention”⁶⁶.

The questions raised by Terrenoire and Durbet were never clearly resolved by the party leadership. Chaban-Delmas, congratulating Durbet and Vanier, sent them accompanied by Roger Frey to Matignon to meet the Prime Minister who, “après une explication orageuse”⁶⁷, invited them to compose a memorandum outlining their grievances and the issue was then considered closed. The episode illustrated the frustration felt by the deputies at their exclusion from the governmental process, frustration that was to resurface on many occasions during the decade when Parliament

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Charlot, *L'UNR*, p.95.

was presented with measures concerning education or agriculture without having been adequately consulted first.

Similar issues were raised when the parliamentary party elected its representatives the following year. On 8 March 1960, the government-backed candidate to succeed Louis Terrenoire as president of the group, André Valabrègue, a deputy for the Hérault, was defeated in the second round of voting by Raymond Schmittlein, deputy for Belfort in Alsace. Already the first round had produced sizeable votes for other candidates, Henri Karcher, Jean-Paul Palewski and André Vidal. Evidently the candidacy of Valabrègue was not one which could unite the deputies. The eventual victor, Schmittlein, was not someone used to accepting orders uncritically from his superiors. His election appeared to respond to the wishes of Raymond Dronne, who had sent a letter to all deputies on 5 March about the contest, complaining about the conduct of the *bureau politique*: He argued that the majority of deputies “ont le sentiment décevant d'être ni écoutés ni utiles. Ils sentent qu'ils n'ont aucune influence sur le gouvernement...”. The *bureau politique*, according to Dronne, was characterised more by docility than by political wisdom. To remedy the situation, the new president should possess the following qualities:

“... Il devra être fidèle au général de Gaulle et soutenir le gouvernement. Mais fidélité ne signifie pas courtoisie et soutien n'est pas synonyme de béni-oui-oui. Notre président doit avoir le cran, au risque de déplaire, de faire entendre la voix du groupe et de l'opinion... Il faut aussi que la présidence du groupe ne devienne plus automatiquement un marchepied vers un poste ministériel... Fidèle gaulliste,

conciliant, habile, perspicace, mais déterminé et courageux, voilà l'oiseau rare qu'il nous faut"⁶⁸.

This was evidently a plea to vote for Schmittlein and clearly illustrated Dronne's determination that the deputies should retain an independent voice. The election of Schmittlein at Valabrègue's expense was undoubtedly intended as a protest by the UNR parliamentary group at the government's agricultural policy - around forty deputies had just signed a statement criticising it, and there was even a suggestion that the UNR group might withhold their support from the government if the General refused to recall Parliament to discuss current problems in the countryside⁶⁹. This demand was refused by de Gaulle, who was consequently accused by the opposition press of exercising absolute power with no respect for the rules of the regime he himself had helped to bring into being. Although Article 30 of the constitution stated that it was the President's job to open and close special sessions of the Assembly, no one had ever imagined that this would give him a right of veto when asked to reconvene the deputies; according to the President it did. Various parties and leaders called in vain for special sessions on many other occasions, and even the Presidents' Conference, asking for one in January 1962 to debate the Fourth Plan, was told it would not be allowed⁷⁰. On this occasion Gaullist deputies had been associated with outright opposition to de Gaulle's attitude.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p.97.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Le Monde*, 1 December 1961.

There were thus three main factors behind the Gaullist parliamentary party's refusal to accept the acquiescent role which the party leadership at times seemed to want to impose on it. The first was the divisions existing within Gaullist politics, which went back over 20 years. Not all Gaullist deputies came from the same background and not all had the same objectives. Some had participated in the Fourth Republic, others had not. Some saw the Fifth Republic as an opportunity to create a new kind of political party, others did not. And some wished to support the General at all costs, while others did not. Secondly, the parliamentary party contained individuals with pride who refused to let themselves be taken for granted. They were not about to allow the government and leadership force them into a passive, secondary role. Thirdly, the deputies must have felt the pressure from constituents on key issues. The fact that some of them signed a motion critical of the government's agricultural policy does suggest they were attempting to reflect some of the anger felt in the French countryside. They were keen to fulfil their role as representatives of the people, not in an abstract, demagogic way, as ideologically motivated deputies of the Fourth Republic might have done, but in a responsible way that would reflect the real concerns of their constituents. How they sought to do this is one of the themes of the next section of this chapter.

INFLUENCING GOVERNMENT POLICY

The *Groupes d'études spécialisés* (GES)

Examination of the conduct of the Gaullist deputies during the early years of the Fifth Republic illustrates the volatility of the

parliamentary group of the Gaullist party. Although it was less pronounced after the Bordeaux party conference, at which the *Algérie Française* faction within the party was finally defeated and the UNR steered towards accepting all de Gaulle's initiatives until the Algerian conflict had been successfully resolved, after 1962 the willingness of some of the deputies to question the government became more pronounced. There were many ways in which the deputies could attempt to influence government policy. Many channels existed which Gaullists could use to ensure that their opinion of Gaullist policy was heard; one of these was the *groupes d'études spécialisés* (GES), specialised study groups in which Gaullist deputies examined particular areas of government policy.

These had been created by the UNR parliamentary group elected in November 1958. They were formed at the group's first meeting in December 1958 and provided an opportunity for the Gaullist deputies to work together before the new session began in January 1959. Their potential was clearly illustrated by the publicity obtained by a report written by Christian de la Malène, UNR deputy for the 14th arrondissement in Paris and the French representative at the European assembly⁷¹, on the government's European policy. By criticising the notion of supranationality as applied to the EEC, it proved an embarrassment to the government and led Roger Frey to disown it almost entirely: "Ce rapport a été discuté, ce qui était son but, mais n'a fait l'objet d'aucun vote. Il est donc totalement inexact de prétendre à cette occasion que l'UNR révèle son programme de politique

⁷¹ *Who's Who in France 1971-2*, Paris 1972.

étrangère"⁷². Despite this, the groups did not flourish during the early years of the Fifth Republic; party secretary general Albin Chalandon did not believe in projects elaborated purely in the closed world of politics and preferred colloquia and round-table meetings which were more open to outside input such as that of businessmen, professionals, administrators and other "dynamic" social forces. He thus did little to stimulate the activity of the UNR study groups. The only productive study group in this period was the one concerned with agriculture, which drafted a bill later approved by the parliamentary group as a whole and tabled in the National Assembly in its name by Louis Terrenoire⁷³.

Only during the second legislature of the Fifth Republic did the GES come close to fulfilling their potential as channels of communication between the government and the parliamentary group. They were given statutory recognition; they were to represent each area of parliamentary work as determined by the *bureau politique* which decided the number of groups and their responsibilities and which demanded that any conclusions reached should not be made public without its consent. Anyone interested could participate, though the head of each group was chosen by the *bureau politique*. The president of the parliamentary group obtained the Prime Minister's approval for the use of government "experts" by the GES, under the authority of the Secretary of State for relations with Parliament, Pierre Dumas. A

⁷² *Le Monde*, 23 December 1958. *Le Monde* had, on 21-22 December, announced that the report had been "unanimously approved" by the UNR foreign policy committee. Frey was no doubt pointing out that one particular group's opinion was not necessarily that of the whole of the UNR.

⁷³ See the *UNR Bulletin de presse*, special edition, 24 July 1959.

circular of 4 January 1963 indicated the importance of this feature to those involved in organising the GES:

“Il ne vous échappera pas, l'intérêt que présenteront de la sorte les réunions des groupes d'études spécialisés du fait qu'y seront confrontés les points de vue du gouvernement et les députés UNR-UDT sur le problème en cause”⁷⁴.

A few months later, a summary of the work of the GES commented approvingly on the degree of co-operation which they permitted between the government and the parliamentary majority. Ministers had kept the study groups informed of the bills which they intended to ask the government to adopt during the coming session, and many draft bills had been sent to the groups by Dumas early enough for them to have time to study them in detail and make suggestions for amendments before the bills were presented to the National Assembly. The GES thus added a new dimension to parliamentary work, enabling deputies to express their opinions and attempt to influence the government⁷⁵.

At the *journées d'études parlementaires* of September 1963, the GES became a recognised part of the party organisation: they presented various motions, based on the reports of their representatives, after having received the approval of the ministers concerned, including those who were members of the *Républicains Indépendants*. Their role, as defined by a circular of 9 July 1963, was considerable, involving the examination of all the issues relevant to their special subject, drafting bills, examining

⁷⁴ UNR-UDT circular of 4 January 1963 signed by Pierre Billotte, vice-president of the UNR-UDT parliamentary group in charge of specialist study groups (Box D, Institut Charles de Gaulle, Paris).

⁷⁵ Résumé of the activities of the GES, *Information et documents*, 30 April 1963.

draft bills prepared by Gaullist deputies, presenting all their suggestions and observations about proposed measures to the government, drafting amendments, oral and written questions in the name of the parliamentary group and proposing through the *bureau politique* what position should be adopted by the parliamentary group on particular issues⁷⁶.

The GES thus had the potential to become a vital part of the parliamentary process. Often, however, their effectiveness could be hindered by the members of the committee and the minister whose department was concerned. Frequently the GES would be headed by the president or vice-president of the parliamentary commissions responsible for the same issues who were too busy to direct this other group as well, and so the GES would be divided into sub-groups, each with an individual head who was too low in the parliamentary hierarchy to possess significant authority. Despite these drawbacks, however, some of the GES became a valuable part of Gaullist parliamentary activity and represented the ability of the Gaullist deputies to attempt to influence government policy.

One group which did prove active, unsurprisingly, given the rural nature of many of the constituencies which UNR-UDT deputies represented, was that which had responsibility for agricultural issues. The way in which it obtained the adoption of the bill it drafted was revealing in many ways; it was one of the few examples of Fifth Republic legislation which originated with deputies. It showed how power was distributed within the UNR-

⁷⁶ UNR-UDT circular of 9 July 1963 signed by Diomède Catroux, vice-president of the UNR-UDT parliamentary group in charge of specialist study groups (Box D, Institut Charles de Gaulle, Paris).

UDT parliamentary group and illustrated the nature of its relations with the executive. In early 1963, the agriculture study group was presented with a report written by a representative from the main agricultural union the FNSEA (*Fédération Nationale des Syndicats d'Exploitants Agricoles*), M. Veillas. This was discussed in a series of meetings, and a white paper for government action was drafted. To show the importance with which this text was regarded by the UNR-UDT group as a whole, the vice-president for study groups, Pierre Billotte, was sent in April 1963 to present it to de Gaulle, who approved the principles on which the document was based. On 25 April, the Minister for Agriculture, Edgar Pisani, attended a meeting of the GES to examine the proposed bill before it was tabled in the Assembly on 16 May 1963. In its meetings of October that same year, the group examined the amendments which the government had proposed; those which the GES accepted to present in Parliament in its own name were drafted and sent to the UNR-UDT legislative service. As for the others, the group was under no obligation to support them - that concerning price-fixing, for example, was officially rejected and a deputy, Arthur Moulin, who represented Avesnes in the Nord region, was delegated to oppose it in the Assembly if necessary.

On 10 October, the group authorised Henri Rey (president of the UNR-UDT group) to lead a delegation to see the Prime Minister and request that the bill be given time in the Assembly immediately after that allocated for the budget⁷⁷. This request was granted and the bill became law on its first reading on 13

⁷⁷ *Information et documents*, GES "agriculture", 31 October 1963.

December 1963; the GES had continued to meet during all this time and decided upon what attitude to adopt towards the government's amendments⁷⁸.

Thus a bill drafted in just two months by a group of Gaullist deputies concerned by a particular problem, one government expert (M. Beylot, a member of Pisani's private office) and one representative of a farmers' organisation (M. Veillas), was accepted by the parliamentary *bureau politique*, presented to the President of the Republic, the Minister of Agriculture and the Prime Minister before being passed by the National Assembly one and a half years after its inception⁷⁹. Some Gaullist deputies were thus capable of making a significant contribution to government policy. There were those who participated actively in parliamentary life and were determined to attempt to exercise some influence. The fact that they could do so successfully shows that Gaullism was not inherently discouraging of parliamentary initiatives. When correctly manipulated, the new procedures could operate effectively.

This does not mean that the Gaullist deputies ran the government's agricultural policy. Much government policy was drafted and defined without consulting them. Many of their speeches in the National Assembly, as the next section will show, illustrate that they were not happy with the changes proposed by

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, December 1963.

⁷⁹ Edmond Bricout used this law in his reply sent to local delegates of the FNSEA and the CNJA who continually demanded of deputies that they contribute to immediate solutions to agricultural problems: "... Vous ne pouvez nier l'efficacité parlementaire, le groupe UNR-UDT ayant non seulement voté les textes proposés mais les ayant encore, sur de nombreux points essentiels, amendés. Il a déposé la proposition de loi relative à l'économie contractuelle en agriculture et l'a fait voter... donnant ainsi pour la première fois dans l'histoire de l'agriculture, le pouvoir de négociation que n'ont jamais possédé encore les agriculteurs" (*ibid.*, March 1964).

the Gaullist government. Some felt that measures passed were confused and incoherent, while others worried that the administration's emphasis on modernisation would mean forcing agriculture to adopt intensive mass production techniques which would threaten the survival of smaller French farms, inhabited by farmers who were still capable of making their voices heard and whose views the Gaullist deputies had to make known, or risk losing their seats.

In addition, some sections of the agricultural unions had decided to deal more directly with the government, rather than espousing the more traditional tactic of using Parliament as a vehicle for their arguments. In the Fifth Republic, it could seem more useful to know two well-placed civil servants than twenty deputies⁸⁰. The voice of the main agricultural union the FNSEA was still influential, and its opposition could still create pressure on the government. The administration thus sought a way around this by dealing directly with the wing of the FNSEA representing younger farmers, the CNJA (*Centre National des Jeunes Agriculteurs*). This group's ideas were much more in tune with government thinking and they were granted close involvement with official agricultural plans. As early as 1959, only a few years after its origin, the CNJA was accorded two seats on the Economic and Social Council and its leaders became privileged interlocutors of the regime⁸¹. From 1959 onwards the CNJA was regularly included, as an officially recognised organisation, in all dealings between the agricultural profession and the State. Given seats on all advisory councils and *commissions paritaires*, the union quickly

⁸⁰ G. Wright, *Rural Revolution in France*, Stanford 1964, p. 162.

⁸¹ F.-H. de Virieu, *La fin d'une agriculture*, Paris 1967, p. 202.

achieved the same status as other longer-established agricultural organisations such as the FNSEA, APCA (*Assemblée Permanente des Chambres d'Agriculture*) and CNMCCA (*Confédération Nationale de la Mutualité, de la Coopération et du Crédit Agricole*). The leaders of the CNJA thus learnt how “the application of pressure through parliament had become outmoded”⁸². They spoke the same language as the ministry attachés at the Hôtel Matignon or the rue de Rivoli and the specialists of the planning commission⁸³.

This point goes to the heart of many of the problems with the characterisation of democracy in the Fifth Republic. The government could indeed ignore the Assembly if it so chose. This is one of the reasons why Gaullism, and the political system it introduced, attracted so much criticism. But the decreasing influence of Parliament was not a phenomenon unique to Gaullism. It was the result of a new neo-corporatist style of government that was beginning to appear in several countries, such as the UK, West Germany and the USA, one in which the expert opinion of the few was beginning to count for at least as much as the worries of the many.

In West Germany, for example, there was considerable behind-the-scenes manoeuvring before policies were formulated and placed publicly on the political agenda. Business organisations, such as the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Federal League of German Employers and the League of German Industry, all had meetings with and influence on government members. Meanwhile employees were represented

⁸² J. Keeler, *The Politics of Neo-corporatism in France*, Oxford 1987, p. 75.

⁸³ H. Mendras, *The Vanishing Peasant. Innovation and Change in French Agriculture*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1970, p. 214.

by such associations as the German Trades Union Federation (*Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*, DGB), the German Union of Salaried Employees (*Deutsche Angestelltenengewerkschaft*, DAG) and the German Federation of Civil Servants (*Deutscher Beamtenbund*, DBB). Representatives of these groups could conduct negotiations with the government in an effort to resolve differences and disputes⁸⁴.

The Gaullist government's co-operation with the CNJA is a good example of this kind of neo-corporatist practice which became typical of the Fifth Republic. The CNJA leaders began to attach fundamental importance to the influence of professional pressure groups on parliament and the administration and concern themselves less with direct political representation. The functioning of the institutions of the Fifth Republic pushed them to this view as much as did their natural ideological leaning. They planned reforms and bills on which they reached agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture, and the minister thus became their best spokesman in the government and in Parliament⁸⁵. It is easy to see why some concluded that the advent of the Fifth Republic was a 'godsend' for the young reformers of the CNJA⁸⁶.

One good illustration of this was the process which led to the *loi complémentaire* of 1962, which introduced a number of measures such as the strengthening of the regional agricultural agencies known as the SAFER (*Sociétés d'Aménagement Foncier et d'Etablissement Rural*). As the law was being drafted, Minister of

⁸⁴ M. Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation: A History of Germany 1918-1990*, Oxford 1991, p. 255; L. Kettenacker, *Germany since 1945*, Oxford 1997, pp. 95-7.

⁸⁵ Mendras, *The Vanishing Peasant*, p. 220.

⁸⁶ Keeler, *Politics of Neocorporatism*, p. 62.

Agriculture Pisani received all farmers' leaders individually, and once saw them all together. He did not consult the political parties, but did receive a delegation from the National Assembly's Production and Exchanges Commission. The law was drafted not by staff at Matignon, but by the department of agriculture⁸⁷, and a passage within it in its final form noted that the new reforms were to be put in place and administered with "the collaboration of the professional agricultural organisations"⁸⁸. The Gaullist party journal, *La Nation*, was proud of the degree of discussion which had taken place:

"La première constatation à faire est évidemment que le pouvoir 'qui ne dialogue qu'avec les foules, jamais avec les hommes', prétend *Le Populaire*, avait longuement dialogué, en l'occurrence, avec les représentants des agriculteurs, qu'un accord était intervenu et que ce sont les députés, par d'innombrables amendements, qui ont édulcoré des textes qui donnaient satisfaction à la profession"⁸⁹.

This kind of practice continued beyond the end of de Gaulle's presidency. In 1971, for example, government and the civil service trades unions agreed a new salary structure for the following year. Parliament, which in principle fixed levels of expenditure on the civil service, was not involved and merely ratified this change in 1972 when the budget was voted. Similarly in 1976, a financial compensation package for farmers adversely affected by the drought of that year was agreed between

⁸⁷ G. Rimareix and Y. Tavernier, "L'Elaboration et le vote de la loi complémentaire à la loi d'orientation agricole", *Revue française de science politique*, Paris 1963, pp. 397-8.

⁸⁸ Keeler, *Politics of Neocorporatism*, p. 67.

⁸⁹ *La Nation*, 30 July 1962.

government and unions and merely ratified by Parliament⁹⁰. Like the informal meetings between ministers and civil servants which served to reduce the role of the *Conseil des ministres* in the governing process, direct dealings with unions or industry associations could serve to confirm the reduced role of Parliament. To some contemporary observers, such practice was undemocratic and should be vigorously opposed; it could however be argued that it was more a symptom of a desire to create a new kind of democracy, one in which efficient management was held to be more important than the contest between ideologically defined movements in electoral and parliamentary politics. Within this context of the development of a neo-corporatist style of government, many of the Gaullist deputies were attempting to be good democrats. They were attempting to promote efficient government, but to maintain a voice in and for Parliament, as their interventions in the Assembly will show.

Within this broader process, the agricultural study group did succeed in performing the role of a parliamentary commission, but one that was reserved exclusively for Gaullist deputies and as such represented a unique opportunity for the UNR-UDT to influence government policy. It received the professional representatives of French agriculture and maintained regular contact with them⁹¹; *rapporteurs* of parliamentary commissions in

⁹⁰ Wright, *Government and politics*, p. 146.

⁹¹ In October 1963, for example, M. de Cafarelli, president of FNSEA, was received by the commission along with MM. Pateau and Breton; they agreed to all meet again “à bref délai et dès la mi-novembre sur le budget de l’agriculture et sur l’économie agricole contractuelle” (*ibid.*, 31 October 1963); similarly, in June 1965, MM. Bruel, Nove-Josserand, Plateau and Breton were in frequent contact with the group (Cafarelli was away in the USA) on the question of livestock (*Information et documents*, GES “agriculture”, June 1965).

charge of important projects kept the group informed⁹², and from April 1963 to June 1965 it received Edgard Pisani, Minister for Agriculture, on at least six occasions⁹³. These were not affairs of pure ceremony: the group actively debated the issues, presented amendments and sometimes even opposed government proposals. In May 1964, for example, Suzanne Ploux, deputy for Châteaulin in Finistère, informed the committee that she had found out that the government was preparing a “*sorte d'avant-projet de loi relatif aux sociétés agricoles foncières et aux sociétés agricoles d'investissements fonciers*”, which to her appeared to be a step in the direction of the nationalisation of land. The committee reacted angrily and Edmond Bricout, its president, suggested that a study group be set up to examine the problem in close collaboration with the government⁹⁴. The following month, Pisani came to explain that a bill concerning forest land investment companies was indeed under preparation and would be submitted to the group in September of that year; as for agricultural land investment companies, no project was ready. The aim of the reform was to free working capital in order to permit the maximum possible investment in technology. The official report of the meeting stated that

⁹² Philippe Rivain, rapporteur of the finance commission, came to speak about the agriculture budget in October 1963, and M. Godefroy, rapporteur of the FORMA budget came to discuss his projects, also in October 1963 (*ibid.*, October 1963); M. Bousseau, rapporteur for the natural disasters affecting agriculture bill, visited in April 1964 (*ibid.*, April 1964).

⁹³ On 18 April 1963, to discuss the price of milk and that of meat (*ibid.*, 30 April 1963), for example, and in February 1965 to discuss property loans and the Brussels negotiations (*ibid.*, February-March 1965).

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, May 1964.

“Le groupe d'études, à l'exception de MM. Sabatier et Laudrin, exprime avec force et précision son opposition doctrinale au point de vue exprimé par le ministre... M. Pisani [se déclare] frappé par la précision des critiques et des suggestions. Rien ne sera mis au point sans consultation du groupe d'études agricoles”⁹⁵.

This committee, then, established a role for itself in the development of all agricultural projects. Its members were committed to making an active contribution to government policy, and the minister in question made a point of listening to their suggestions. Agriculture was an issue which interested many Gaullist deputies and much of the parliamentary work they undertook concerned this sector, as will be further confirmed by examination of the speeches they made in Parliament.

In so doing, they were making the voices of their constituents heard, if in different ways than before. Deputies did attempt to echo the climate of opinion created outside the chamber, for example by the action organised by the agricultural unions in 1960-1⁹⁶. They did not, unlike de Gaulle, believe that they should stay aloof from such agitation but seek to give it meaningful democratic voice. This will be illustrated in the next section of this chapter. Undoubtedly, a desire truly to represent constituents in the ways made possible by the new regime did shape the conduct of some Gaullist deputies during the 1960s.

As for the Gaullist study groups, it has to be said that the one dealing with agriculture was the exception rather than the

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, June 1964. The GES defended the following principles: all must retain their right to their property; for those who cannot work it themselves, the existence of the long-term lease with clauses to protect them against bad management and non-payment; the plus-values in capital to accrue over the next ten years must go to farmers, not to large companies.

⁹⁶ See pp. 276-7.

rule. Others were less influential. Those responsible for defence and foreign affairs, for example, were much less active. Once the notion of a *domaine réservé* consisting of defence and foreign policy had been introduced and firmly established, any intervention by the study groups was bound to be unwelcome. The deputies, conscious of this position, swiftly abandoned a committee which was unlikely to produce any concrete results. The foreign affairs group saw itself “comme un relais d'informations à caractère confidentiel entre le gouvernement et le groupe parlementaire UNR-UDT”⁹⁷. It insisted, rather self-importantly, upon the secret nature of much of the information to which it was privileged to have access. Such information does not seem to have been regularly received - the committee met only four times in two years, and the sub-group notionally concerned with national defence failed to meet at all, despite the important measures being debated in the Assembly⁹⁸.

This was the kind of process which gave ammunition to the critics of Gaullism. In a similar example the study group for economic and financial affairs only ever met its relevant minister once, on 6 February 1963, when Valéry Giscard d'Estaing promised close collaboration with the committee in the future over the preparation of his ambitious programme of reforms⁹⁹. Giscard

⁹⁷ Account of the first meeting of the GES, 7 February 1963; *Informations et documents*, 30 April 1963.

⁹⁸ The initial meeting took place on 7 February and heard a résumé of the international situation; Couve de Murville, the Foreign Secretary, was present (*ibid.*, 30 April 1963). The other meetings were held in May 1964, when General Billotte gave a talk on NATO (*ibid.*, May 1964); November 1964, when Michel Habib-Deloncle spoke on Europe (*ibid.*, November 1964), and May 1965, when Deloncle simply answered committee members' questions (*ibid.*, May 1965).

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, No. 2, 30 April 1963. Members were convened on one other occasion, in May 1964, to receive a delegation from the *Union française des industries d'exportation* (UFIE) led by MM. Alterman and Barioz (*ibid.*, May 1964).

seems to have disappointed the UNR-UDT deputies; in December 1963, the sub-group for commerce and distribution declared that it had not been kept informed of government activity, despite the detailed suggestions that the group had made¹⁰⁰. Dialogue between the UNR-UDT and the government on economic and financial affairs appears to have been restricted to the group's *bureau politique* and Jean-Paul Palewski, the president of the parliamentary committee for these matters.

Yet two sub-groups of this committee did achieve a reasonable degree of activity; that concerned with commerce, distribution and artisans and that concerned with fiscal issues. The former concentrated its attention on commercial leases. A delegation of four deputies examined this question in April 1964. After discussing the government's proposals, the group decided to draft its own bill, which, adopted by the parliamentary group on 29-30 April 1964, was accepted by its *bureau politique* on 5 May and submitted with its approval to Prime Minister Georges Pompidou by Pierre Dumas, Minister for Relations with Parliament, before being tabled in the Assembly on 13 May 1964¹⁰¹. The taxation sub-group, headed by Roger Raulet, worked with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of the Interior to produce a detailed study of profit tax and local taxes. In November 1963 it opposed the extension of VAT to commerce in response to the opposition of many mayors of towns such as Bordeaux who felt that their communes already paid their share in direct taxation. This proposed measure in fact caused so much anger in the UNR-UDT parliamentary group that Prime Minister Pompidou was obliged

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, December 1963.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, April 1964.

to reassure deputies that it was a distant prospect, and would be drafted at Matignon after consultations, not in the enclosed world of the Ministry of Finance¹⁰².

The GES for social affairs could rely on the active interest of the Minister of Labour Gilbert Grandval and the long-standing concern with the world of work of the left-wing Gaullists of the UDT such as René Capitant and Louis Vallon. Grandval attended a meeting of the group on 16 January 1963 to consult it over his plans for the coming legislature, in December 1963 to indicate which propositions the government as a whole was willing to accept, and in April 1965 to defend his reform of the structure of company boards and his plans for the reorganisation of the Labour Ministry. Although none of the group's suggestions became law, it provided a valuable forum in which deputies could express their views. In so doing, they were making an attempt to participate in the governmental process. The fact that the government remained hostile to their plans illustrated the diversity of objectives between UNR and UDT which was a feature of Gaullism in the 1960s¹⁰³.

Lack of response from the government often led to deputies becoming disheartened. Maurice Lemaire, president of the GES for redevelopment (*l'aménagement du territoire*), dissolved it when it became clear that his warnings of the dangers of imbalances in the relative levels of investment in Paris and in the provinces were not being heeded¹⁰⁴. This was an indication of the perceived Parisian

¹⁰² *ibid.*, November 1963, and *Le Monde*, 19 December 1963.

¹⁰³ See Chapter Three.

¹⁰⁴ Reiterated on many occasions in interviews and in *Informations et documents*, 30 November 1963.

bias of the government's attitude towards this question, which is more fully discussed in Chapter Five. A sub-group of this committee, set up to study the question of energy and how Europe's dependence on the Third World might be reduced, met with similar indifference. Another sub-group, established to study construction and housing, did manage to interest the relevant minister Jacques Maziol sufficiently to receive a visit from him, and André Fanton, deputy for the 11th *arrondissement* in Paris and deputy secretary general of the UNR between 1961 and 1967, succeeded in turning it into a kind of commission of enquiry into the state-run Deposits Fund, which he accused of charging excessive rates of interest. The director of the fund and the director of construction were both summoned to defend themselves before the sub-group for construction and housing on 16 December 1964: the matter was never resolved¹⁰⁵. Although limited, such activities did indicate a desire on the part of some deputies to contribute to particular aspects of policy.

The GES for public health, led by Dr. Jean Le Gall, a deputy for the Ardennes, spent its time on the one hand researching potential improvements to be proposed to the Health Ministry concerning hospitals, disabled and difficult children, social medicine and hygiene, and on the other hand defending the interest of the medical and paramedical profession. Like the agricultural study group, it was in regular contact with members of the profession - in 1964, for example, it interviewed a delegation from the National Dental Association, the secretary general of the National Association of Pharmacists, the president of the National

¹⁰⁵ *Information et documents*, January 1965.

Association of Pharmaceutical Companies and the president and the secretary general of the Association of Rural Pharmacists¹⁰⁶. It thus actively carried out research into measures which could be proposed to the Health Minister.

The degree of importance of each individual GES varied greatly. Evidently many of them did not achieve a great deal in terms of actually generating or influencing legislation. But there can be no doubt that the group concerned with agriculture did make a contribution, however minor, to government policy in this area. It was not the case that all deputies, as many critics suggested, were content meekly to support the government's initiatives. Many took an active interest in influencing these initiatives. In so doing they were attempting to make the best use of the new institutional arrangements and showing themselves to be willing democrats. They exemplified the new kind of democrat the Fifth Republic aimed to create; one who, while he did not seek to bring down the government he was supposed to support, took an active part in discussing and drafting the measures which it proposed. Their conduct, despite its lack of immediate impact upon political life, provides a different perspective on Gaullism than that to be gained from the speeches of the General. They revealed its inner complexity. Dialogue and co-operation were valued by some Gaullists. There were other means, besides the GES, of attempting to bring such dialogue about.

¹⁰⁶ *Information et documents*, June 1964; October 1964; November 1964; January 1965.

Informal contacts

Communication between the government and the deputies was officially conducted by the parliamentary group's *bureau politique*, as we have seen. No bill, no written question or oral question on any issue considered fundamental to the government's policy could be tabled in the Assembly without the consent of the *bureau*. Permission was also required from this body before a UNR-UDT deputy could support any bill introduced by a non-Gaullist. The *bureau* was always the first to know of the government's intentions for the coming sessions, and could thus ensure that deputies did not deviate too far from these.

Every meeting of the *bureau politique* was attended by at least one minister, the Secretary of State for relations with Parliament (effectively the government's delegate within the group and the group's delegate within the government). He had regular meetings with the Prime Minister, who would thus be kept informed of opinions within the parliamentary party. Personal links were to prove the most significant ones in the Gaullist system of government. At the highest level, the General and his ministers tended to rely on a few chosen collaborators whom they knew they could trust¹⁰⁷. Similarly, effective co-operation between UNR-UDT leaders and the parliamentary party depended on mutual trust; relations were often problematic, as we have seen, as a result of the government's autocratic tendencies, but many ministers and party figures did understand the need for regular communication and personal contact.

¹⁰⁷ See chapter two.

Louis Terrenoire, president of the parliamentary party from 1959 to 1962, recalled the weekly meetings held by Michel Debré for all leaders of the groups which constituted the parliamentary majority with great fondness:

“C'était une heureuse coutume qu'il avait créée. Accompagné généralement de Michel Habib-Deloncle (secrétaire général exécutif du groupe) et du sénateur Maurice Bayrou (président du groupe sénatorial), j'y rencontrais les indépendants Henri Bergasse et François Valentin, le républicain populaire Charles Bosson, le député de Bône, Pierre Portolano et, fort souvent, le président Paul Reynaud”¹⁰⁸.

This kind of meeting was essential for Debré if the cohesion of the majority was to be maintained, yet it was also conducive to a sense of independent group identity which could turn against him.

Later on in the legislature the party leaders were received separately. This reduced their sense of group identity but it was important that they still had regular contact with the Prime Minister. He kept them informed before the opening of a new parliamentary session about the general outlines of policy or about specific decisions, such as fixing the prices of agricultural products on 5 October 1961, the drafting of the schools bill in 1959¹⁰⁹ and of the agriculture bill in 1962. Jacques Chaban-Delmas, challenged in a radio debate during the parliamentary election campaign of 1962 to cite a single instance when the UNR had openly disagreed with

¹⁰⁸ Terrenoire, *De Gaulle et l'Algérie*, p. 132. The implication of these meetings was that the UNR was merely one group among many which made up the cross-party formation supporting government policy, and benefited from no particular privileges. At the beginning of his term as Prime Minister, Debré regularly received opposition leaders such as Guy Mollet, who came once a month (see *Le courrier politique*, 10 April 1959).

¹⁰⁹ Coutrot, “La loi scolaire”, pp. 366, 376.

de Gaulle and altered his decision, spoke of the *loi complémentaire* on agriculture:

“... Lors du débat sur les lois agricoles, il y a eu des modifications importantes qui sont intervenues. Parfaitement, vous l'ignorez peut-être mais je peux vous le dire soit avant le dépôt - soit après, par amendements et, précisément, par des discussions dont je peux dire qu'ils ont été très âpres et acharnées... Le fait de voter conformément à une directive générale n'empêche pas de discuter sur cette directive”¹¹⁰.

Raymond Schmittlein was prepared to vouch for good communication between government and party when he told Jean Charlot that “Monsieur Michel Debré m'avait en tant que président du groupe ouvert la porte de son directeur de cabinet, M. Racine, qui me tenait au courant de tout”¹¹¹. And indeed Debré was in frequent contact with the parliamentary party, not just in difficult moments to reinforce the government's authority, such as in October 1959 over the Delbecque resignations crisis, or in March 1960 when he came to ask that the thirty or so deputies who had demanded Parliament's recall to discuss agricultural problems retract their request, or in April of the same year when Jacques Soustelle was expelled from the party. He also addressed the group on more detailed issues, such as in October 1959 (eight days after demanding severity towards Delbecque) when he answered deputies' queries on economic, agricultural and fiscal matters. At this meeting, he suggested that the party put the difficult times

¹¹⁰ M. Charlot, M. Cotta and N. Racine (eds.), *La campagne électorale, octobre-novembre 1962*, Vol. 2, Paris 1963, p. 179.

¹¹¹ Charlot, *L'UNR*, p. 179.

behind it, promising to visit them two or three times per month to keep them informed. He kept his promise, at least when Parliament was in session. On 17 October 1961, for example, he presented the finance bill, accompanied by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing; on 24 October, he came to speak on the government's social policy, and on 21 November to explain its wages policy¹¹².

Georges Pompidou took this approach one step further; his time as Prime Minister witnessed an extremely good understanding between government and party. Once or twice a year he would invite all the deputies to a cocktail party, and have individual groups (made up of all of the deputies from a particular region) to lunch regularly. He met the *bureau politique* at least two or three times per session, and received the president of the parliamentary group twice a week when Parliament was in session, twice a month when it was not. In times of crisis, he went out of his way to communicate with the deputies as much as possible; on 2 October 1962 he received a UNR delegation to discuss the referendum on the constitution and the parliamentary elections which seemed its likely consequence (the government was facing a great deal of opposition within Parliament over this measure and eventually lost a no-confidence motion on 5 October). On 25 October, before the legislative élections which resulted from the loss of the opposition's censure motion, he chaired a meeting between ministers from the *Républicains Indépendants* and UNR leaders to encourage local electoral alliances between the two formations, bringing the same people back on 19 November to assess the results. In March 1963 he twice

¹¹² *ibid.*, p. 180.

received UNR delegations to discuss the miners' strike, as in autumn 1964 when the opposition attempted to censure the government over its agricultural policy. He continued the tradition established by Michel Debré of regularly explaining government policy to UNR deputies in the *salle Colbert* at the *Palais Bourbon*. At the opening of each session, he gave them a private audience concerning his plans, and addressed them at the end of each to sum up all that had been achieved and thank them personally for their help¹¹³. That this effort was appreciated by the deputies was in no doubt; Pierre Dumas noted at the *Conseil des Ministres* of 31 July 1962 that “Au cours de cette session, les relations avec le Parlement se sont nettement améliorées. C'est l'oeuvre personnelle de M. Pompidou. Elle a été très appréciée du Parlement”¹¹⁴.

The meetings between the Prime Minister and the parliamentary party could result in organisational changes: on 23 February 1963, Pompidou agreed to a proposition of the group that he give a televised address twice a year to underline the achievements of the government¹¹⁵. In September 1963, at the *Journées d'études parlementaires* at Beaulieu-sur-Mer, he decided that a minister should be present at all meetings of the parliamentary party, in order to “répondre aux questions qui lui seraient posées et ainsi nous faire partager plus complètement les différentes préoccupations ministérielles”, in the words of the group's president, Henry Rey¹¹⁶. In April 1965, in response to a

¹¹³ *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Peyrefitte, *de Gaulle*, p. 198.

¹¹⁵ *La Nation*, 21 February 1963.

¹¹⁶ *La Nation*, 27 September 1963. The minister in question was almost always Pierre Dumas, Minister for relations with Parliament.

request from Jacques Chaban-Delmas, he asked all the members of the government to choose a member of their private office to liaise permanently with the National Assembly's parliamentary information department¹¹⁷. Ministers at the same time learned not to restrict their explanations to parliamentary commissions but to extend them to the GES, the UNR-UDT weekly meeting and the party's *bureau politique*. On 22 January 1963 Pierre Messmer addressed the parliamentary party on France's new military strike force, while on 7 February they had the benefit of the views of Messmer, Maurice Couve de Murville and Michel Habib-Deloncle on the Brussels crisis. In April 1965 Gilbert Grandval explained his ideas for the reform of company boards, and Edgard Pisani, as we have seen, was a regular visitor to the party GES on agriculture¹¹⁸. Though Pompidou cannot take direct responsibility for all of these developments, his readiness to talk and co-operate with the UNR-UDT could only serve as an example to others.

Such work by those in power helped to prevent relations between the government and the parliamentary party from becoming openly conflictual. The problems experienced during the early years of the Fifth Republic illustrated the value of a good understanding between deputies and ministers. This created a framework of collaboration and consensus in which the Gaullist deputies could contribute their opinions when government policy was being drafted. This was all part of the new kind of democracy which Gaullism was in the process of creating. Through the GES and through informal contacts with the government, they could express criticism of Gaullist policy. If this policy was still not

¹¹⁷ *Le Monde*, 8 April 1964.

¹¹⁸ Charlot, *L'UNR*, p.181.

satisfactory by the time it reached the National Assembly, however, the deputies could denounce it publicly from the tribune. By availing themselves of all possible opportunities to criticise the government, some Gaullist deputies showed that they believed that they had a contribution to make to Gaullism.

Speeches in the National Assembly

Contemporary commentators had no doubt that, tied to the necessity of always supporting the government, none of the Gaullist deputies could deviate from the opinions dictated by their leaders. Yet this view was based on the assumption that casting votes was the only significant activity which occurred in the National Assembly. As we have already seen, there were many ways in which the Gaullist deputies could influence the government. Even if they did not actually vote against its policies, they still found means to attempt to pressurise it and communicate their displeasure.

Certainly the original statutes of the UNR parliamentary group stipulated that the deputies had to accept voting discipline. All had been required to sign a loyalty pledge in 1958 which read as follows:

“Elu député UNR, je confirme solennellement mon adhésion à l'UNR et à son groupe parlementaire. Respectueux du mandat que m'ont confié les électeurs, je m'interdis pendant toute la durée de la législature de m'inscrire à tout autre groupe. Je m'engage à rester fidèle aux objectifs de l'UNR, à soutenir au Parlement et dans ma circonscription l'action du général de Gaulle, à accepter la discipline de vote décidée par la majorité du groupe pour les questions importantes touchant à la vie de la Nation et de la Communauté

française, afin de maintenir la cohésion de notre groupe et l'esprit de notre mouvement"¹¹⁹.

Far from being a manifestation of the authoritarian nature of Gaullism, such a statement was an acknowledgement of the diversity of the parliamentary group in that it reflected the need to prevent the kind of split among deputies which had destroyed the last Gaullist party, the RPF, during the Fourth Republic. The Gaullist leaders were aware of the potential for disagreements within the Gaullist movement and voting discipline was the means they had decided upon to minimise this potential. As Roger Frey told Alain Peyrefitte in private, "Nous n'avons pas besoin de cavaliers caracolants"¹²⁰. If the Fifth Republic was to deliver stable government, as Gaullism had promised, it had to be able to rely, at least initially, on a solid group of supporters who would help ministers negotiate the difficult early years of the regime.

The fact that the statutes of the parliamentary group were soon revised suggests that they were generally considered to be too strict. The revision was the first sign that the deputies were beginning to assert themselves. The new statutes, adopted on 23 September 1960 at the *journées d'études parlementaires* at Arcachon, were intended to allow the deputies greater freedom of manoeuvre. Article 22 began "A l'intérieur du groupe la liberté d'expression et de vote est entière". On matters external to the group, the statutes said that in every aspect of parliamentary life deputies should maintain "dans leurs paroles, leurs écrits et leurs votes une constante solidarité avec la pensée de la majorité du

¹¹⁹ *Le Monde*, 10 December 1958.

¹²⁰ Peyrefitte, *de Gaulle*, p. 38.

groupe". But this was only absolutely imperative when the group had decided in advance that they should all vote together. To avoid arbitrariness,

"tout député peut, au cours de la réunion hebdomadaire du groupe, demander que celui-ci prenne position séance tenante ou au cours d'une séance spéciale... sur une question figurant à l'ordre du jour de l'Assemblée pour la semaine à venir... Si le groupe ne fait pas droit de cette requête les membres du groupe ont totale liberté sur la question soulevée"¹²¹.

The statutes thus accepted a certain degree of freedom in the conduct of deputies, provided that they maintained voting discipline on issues considered to affect major aspects of government policy. Some deputies, such as Achille Peretti, deputy for Neuilly and Puteaux, still felt that this was too rigid. Peretti felt that demands for discipline would still be made on secondary issues as well as the most important ones. Decisions made by the parliamentary group could still, after all, be overruled by the party's *bureau politique*. Peretti also deplored the fact that deputies would, if they expressed an individual opinion in minor debates, "encourir les 'foudres' amicales mais réelles du responsable UNR-UDT de séance"¹²². Clearly even these newly modified rules for the conduct of deputies did not meet with universal approval.

Failure to observe the statutes could lead to the *bureau politique* taking action such as official warnings followed by the exclusion of the offender from group meetings, or from the party

¹²¹ Statutes of the UNR parliamentary group (see Charlot, *L'UNR*, pp. 346-350).

¹²² Letter from Achille Peretti, deputy and Mayor of Neuilly, to the president of the UNR-UDT parliamentary group Henri Rey, *Le Monde*, 27 July 1963.

altogether. This had already happened to Jacques Soustelle, as we have seen in Chapter Three. Such sanctions were, however, dependent on the vote of the group. Any deputy excluded by the *bureau politique* was also disqualified from sitting with the parliamentary group. The severity of such rules was illustrated by the case of Raymond Dronne.

Dronne, a former RPF and RS deputy for La Flèche in the Sarthe region, and now its UNR representative, had been a member of the central committee of the UNR but was voted off at the Bordeaux *assises* due to his links with the *Algérie Française* movement. He was given an official warning on 10 July 1959 by the UNR central committee after the publication of several articles in the *Journal du Parlement* and *Nouveaux Jours* criticising Chalandon and the party administration. On 17 December 1960, during the campaign for the referendum of 8 January 1961 on Algeria, he signed, along with nine other UNR deputies, a manifesto criticising the government's Algerian policy and accusing it of practising “trop souvent la politique antinationale d'une certaine gauche et la politique antisociale d'une certaine droite”¹²³. The group's *bureau politique* decided to wait until after the referendum before taking action, and when it did, restricted itself to a warning, since Dronne had not openly campaigned for a “No” vote. He was informed of this decision in writing by the president of the group, Raymond Schmittlein, on 2 March 1961. The tone of the letter revealed much of the kind of pressure placed on Gaullists to encourage them to conform to official party policy.

¹²³ Manifesto published on 17 December 1960 and signed by deputies Raymond Dronne (Sarthe), Henri Fabre (Var), Raymond Poutier (Seine), Jean Vitel (Var), Emile Luciani (Somme), Emmanuel Villedieu (Calvados), Alexandre Camino (Basses-Pyrénées), Hervé Nader (Finistère), Jean-Yves Chapalain (Sarthe) and Henri Duflot (Pas-de-Calais).

It was implied that the shared experience of Gaullism should bind all the deputies together.

“... Tu sais quelle amitié le groupe a pour toi... Beaucoup de nos amis sont peînés à la pensée que tu ne te sentes pas tenus au groupe par les liens de vieille camaraderie que nous ressentons tous à ton égard et ils ont cru remarquer, depuis quelque temps déjà, que tu te détachais de nous... Si tu veux bien faire à tes vieux camarades le plaisir de te montrer plus continent dans l'emploi du verbe, je pense que toute l'affaire pourrait en rester là”.

There could be no clearer illustration of the language of *compagnonnage*. In Dronne's case, however, it was not effective. For many Gaullist deputies, the right to an independent opinion was more important than loyalty to de Gaulle. Dronne replied with spirit:

“... Tu sais bien que j'ai beaucoup d'amitié pour toi et aussi pour beaucoup de membres du groupe. Je suis un gaulliste de 1940 et je suis trop vieux pour changer. Mais ma fidélité au général de Gaulle ne m'empêche pas de garder ma liberté d'expression...”¹²⁴.

Only when he voted against the budget for Algeria and founded the *Mouvement civique unité et sauvegarde de la République* did the *bureau politique* formally exclude the deputy for the Sarthe. Again Schmittlein wrote to him:

¹²⁴ Unpublished correspondence cited in Charlot, *L'UNR*, p. 148. Letter from Raymond Schmittlein to Raymond Dronne, 2 March 1961. Reply from Raymond Dronne, 3 March 1961.

“Crois... que je te reste très fidèlement attaché et que c'est pour moi un vrai crève-cœur de voir un compagnon de la première heure se séparer ainsi de nous...”¹²⁵.

Even if personal relations remained cordial, political allegiances could easily break down. Dronne's case was an early illustration of the difficulties Gaullists would have in reconciling their desire for freedom of expression with their position as government supporters. Dronne's break with the Gaullist party was a clear one; in 1967 he was re-elected as deputy for La Flèche in the Sarthe as a candidate for the centrist group *Progrès et démocratie Moderne*¹²⁶. In the early years of the Fifth Republic, the political situation was a tense one, and disagreement with the government's Algerian policy, as already illustrated, was accepted only with great difficulty. Later on in the decade, it became easier for Gaullist deputies to speak their minds although many of them preferred not to do so.

The first speech made by a member of the UNR in Parliament was that of Louis Terrenoire, president of the parliamentary group, speaking on behalf of all Gaullist deputies in the debate on Debré's governmental declaration. Terrenoire, as an experienced politician¹²⁷, knew that he had to set an example, as his conduct would set the limits of what was and what was not acceptable in the new Assembly. An examination of his speech is thus extremely helpful in understanding what was expected of Gaullist deputies in the 1960s.

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 148. Letter from Raymond Schmittlein to Raymond Dronne, 22 November 1961.

¹²⁶ *Who's Who in France 1971-2*, Paris 1972.

¹²⁷ He had been a deputy for the region of the Orne between 1945 and 1951 and secretary general of the RPF between 1951 and 1953.

Evidently, an important aspect of Terrenoire's intervention had to be his profession of support for the government.

“Vous jouissez de toute notre confiance, ainsi que vous le démontrera le vote massif que nous émettrons à l'issue de ce débat”¹²⁸.

Those deputies who were part of the majority had been elected to do just that, and would not be withdrawing their votes upon minor pretexts or upon orders from party headquarters. Their conduct would be radically different from that of their predecessors during the Fourth Republic. Terrenoire thus saw it as his duty to express the group's approval of the recent government ordinances designed to stabilize the country after the disorder of early 1958. However, he also thought it his duty to reflect the problems which had arisen as a result of the government's actions. Farmers, he said, had been disconcerted by the sudden change in agricultural policy. To calm their worries about the future, it was essential that the government should articulate a long-term agricultural policy and explain exactly what it wanted to achieve. In addition, war veterans had been shocked by the abolition of their state pension:

“Pour beaucoup, elle représentait une livraison de charbon ou une note d'électricité. Sans sortir de ces considérations simplement humaines, n'est-il pas possible d'assouplir une disposition qui n'est qu'une pièce mineure dans l'ensemble des textes économiques et financiers? Je fais appel à votre coeur, Monsieur le Premier Ministre, pour que sur ce point

¹²⁸ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 15 janvier 1959, p. 36.

vous y soyez plus sensible que la raison froide qui découle des chiffres”¹²⁹.

Such comments are immensely revealing about what was perceived to be acceptable parliamentary behaviour for a Gaullist. It was essential to affirm one's faith in and support for the government, but this did not mean one had to refrain from all criticism; in fact, in the minds of many, it is easy to see how the inevitability of the UNR's support for the government virtually *permitted* negative comments, since there was usually no question of actually voting *against* ministers. This criticism was often based on attempts to reflect the concerns of constituents; in this case, farmers and war veterans. Gaullist deputies, although perhaps comfortable in their cocoon of support for de Gaulle, were not immune to opinions articulated outside the Assembly. It was part of their duty to pass the concerns of the people on to the government. This was what Gaullist deputies understood by the notion of “constructive” criticism, and it is well illustrated by Terrenoire's speech of 15 January. His closing remarks on the ordinances encapsulate this attitude:

“Cet ensemble d'ordonnances, qui ont marqué la volonté d'assainir enfin notre situation financière, doit atteindre son objet, certes, qui est de rendre au franc sa respectabilité de jadis; mais, de grâce! n'oublions pas que dans tout cela il y a aussi des valeurs humaines à préserver et qu'un trop-plein d'injustices irait à l'encontre du but poursuivi”¹³⁰.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 37.

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 37.

This approach to parliamentary discussion reflected Chalandon's ideas about what the UNR should be; a party which supported the government on issues of decisive national importance (the *secteur réservé* defined at the party's Bordeaux congress in November 1959) but which asserted its own views in other areas. These areas (the *secteur ouvert*), broadly understood as social and economic policy, were generally considered less crucial but did allow the Gaullists to intervene in practical ways. This was exactly what Terrenoire was doing in this speech; accepting the essential task of re-establishing the international reputation of the French currency while simultaneously drawing attention to the deleterious effects the measures taken to achieve this might have upon the French people. Given such an approach, it is not surprising that many Gaullist deputies remained unsure as to what degree of criticism would be considered acceptable by de Gaulle and his government. When were they making an acceptable contribution to democratic debate, and when were they making the government's job impossible and thus going against the spirit of the new Republic? If even the president of the parliamentary group was allowed to offer less than wholehearted support when faced by the government's actions at a moment of extreme national difficulty such as that in 1959, it seemed that the deputies should certainly be allowed a certain degree of freedom of expression during less dramatic times, such as between 1962 and 1967.

The necessity for the deputies to maintain some freedom was all the more urgent given the natural tendency of governments to isolate themselves from the views of the people. In Terrenoire's view, there was a very real risk of autocratic rule.

Although the presence of de Gaulle as head of State represented a unique opportunity for France, there still existed the danger that he and his government would lose touch with public opinion. It was for the deputies to reflect the views of the people and bring them to bear upon the government.

“Pour que votre Gouvernement soit digne d'une démocratie du XX^e siècle, il doit encore, monsieur le Premier ministre, maintenir un dialogue constant avec le peuple, garder le contact avec l'opinion; sinon, vous risquez de ne pas tenir pendant cinq ans”¹³¹.

Terrenoire concluded his speech with his definition of the role of the parliamentary majority:

“Il faut que la majorité soit comme un corps intermédiaire entre le ministère et la masse du peuple. Il faut que, par elle, l'influx gouvernemental circule à travers tout le pays”.

The notion of a “corps intermédiaire” did not mean that the majority was to defend the administration at all costs throughout the country, nor that it was to become solely the voice of the people against it. Terrenoire envisaged a two-way process, underpinned by an unspoken agreement between government and majority:

“Quant au contrat de nature qui lie la majorité au Gouvernement, il doit être fondé sur la loyauté réciproque, mais aussi sur l'information réciproque. Membres de la majorité et dans le respect des droits de la minorité, nous devons nous comporter comme les propagandistes - je n'ai

¹³¹ *ibid.*, p. 38.

pas peur du mot - de l'action gouvernementale à travers le pays; mais, en retour, le Gouvernement devra nous écouter si nous lui traduisons en toute franchise les sentiments du peuple. De cette manière, nous développerons une forme de démocratie vivante, moderne, dynamique, et pour tout dire, de démocratie jeune”.

In expressing a desire to create a living, modern, dynamic democracy, Terrenoire was echoing Baume's desire to create a new set of political practices appropriate for a new kind of society. In the Assembly, this appeared to mean that the majority was capable of being an efficient aid to the government's work, but ministers would encounter difficulties if they neglected their supporters. Gaullists should be closely involved with all the decisions of the executive.

Terrenoire's speech is a useful starting point for an appreciation of the way in which the Gaullist deputies conducted themselves in Parliament. He raised most of the problems which the UNR would face, and, conscious of the importance of his words as the very first Gaullist who was not a member of the government to intervene in a Fifth Republic debate, attempted to define solutions to them. It remained to be seen if the other deputies would follow. It was extremely difficult to strike the correct balance between making helpful suggestions to the government and being actively critical of it. His ultimate aim could be seen as the definition of a new kind of democracy which was more suitable for the world of the 1960s and which echoed the functioning of regimes elsewhere in Europe.

In any case, Terrenoire's speech, however critical, could be contrasted with that of Jean Legendre, a Socialist deputy who was

swiftly interrupted by the Gaullists after claiming that not a great deal had changed with the arrival of the Fifth Republic and mockingly pointing out that the new Labour Minister was not a Member of Parliament. Debré was incensed:

“Permettez-moi de vous dire qu'en tout cas, une chose n'a pas changé: il y a en effet, à cette tribune, un homme qui, depuis quelques minutes rappelle, malheureusement, les plus mauvais aspects de la IV^e République, Cet homme, c'est vous-même!”¹³².

This appeared to suggest that any criticism of those in power would entail a return to the bad old ways of the previous regime. If the Gaullists were to be remembered as those who had reformed and reinvigorated French political life, they could not afford to expose themselves to such allegations. They avoided this by inventing a discourse of constructive criticism, in which expression of support for the government was combined with criticism for some of its actions. This allowed them to make a positive contribution to government thinking without being accused of opposing it. This was felt to be an appropriate form of discourse for the new kind of democracy Gaullism wanted to create.

The government's education policy became a focus for the Gaullist deputies' criticism throughout the 1960s. It is not immediately evident why they seemed to care so much about education. But there was certainly no shortage of measures to discuss; successive Gaullist governments were extremely active in

¹³² *ibid.*, p. 45.

their attempts to reform the increasingly outdated French system. The first changes were the Berthoin reforms, passed in January 1959. These extended compulsory schooling from the age of 14 to the age of 16 and created the *cycle d'observation* (observation stage), lasting two years, during which pupils' progress would be monitored in order to determine which kind of education they should undertake from the age of thirteen. These measures were followed in August 1963 by the creation of the *collèges d'enseignement secondaire* (CES), the *collèges d'enseignement général* (CEG) and the postponement of student orientation until the age of 14, reforms that were undertaken under the aegis of Education Minister Christian Fouchet. In June 1965, the government redefined the *filières de second cycle* and created the technical baccalauréat; in January 1966 it created the IUT, the *Instituts universitaires de technologie*, and in June 1966, reorganised higher education into three clearly-defined stages, the *premier cycle*, *deuxième cycle* and *troisième cycle*. All of which shows that Gaullist governments were animated by a desire to reform French education.

A good example of the Gaullist interest in education came with the vote of the law on Church schools in 1959. This eventually became known as the *loi Debré*, after the Prime Minister who supported it. The issue was the degree of State aid that should be afforded to Church schools, and it was one which had caused a great deal of controversy during the Fourth Republic, controversy ended by the vote of the Barangé law in 1951¹³³. Nevertheless, the incoming Gaullist government did not consider

¹³³ Coutrot, "La loi scolaire", p. 352.

the solution satisfactory and immediately undertook to resolve the problem. One notable aspect of the drafting of the final law was the involvement of the *Association parlementaire pour la liberté de l'enseignement*, which included a number of members from the UNR. This group played a vital role in discussing the project with the government and with educational groups and as such represents a good example of parliamentary involvement in policymaking. The *Association* enabled the government to produce a text that would not antagonise the many people concerned by the issue – which was still capable of rousing dormant religious and anticlerical loyalties – and pass safely through Parliament¹³⁴.

The commission managed to put forward the views of deputies in a way which directly affected the form of the legislation, even if it was not able to dictate its precise form. One contemporary commentator wrote that the Prime Minister had allowed himself to be led by Parliament, which itself was inspired lobbies; an argument which concedes that the Assembly did in fact play an important role. It does seem that the government's main aim was to obtain the agreement of a parliamentary majority which was in touch with interest groups, such as the *Association des parents d'élèves de l'enseignement libre* (APEL) and the *Comité national d'action laïque* (CNAL); the contribution of these groups really seems to have been to create a climate of opinion which the government could not ignore, rather than ensuring their demands were met in their entirety. Similarly, the parliamentary association played the role of an arbitrator between different points of view, rather than the role of a pressure group campaigning for the

¹³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 375.

adoption of specific measures. One analyst concluded that “les signes d’un style politique nouveau sont apparus”¹³⁵.

This episode indicates the Gaullist interest in education policy. This interest is confirmed by the number of speeches made by Gaullist deputies on education during the 1960s. Many of them accused Gaullist governments of failing to define an overall objective in their attitude towards education. The measures introduced by the government were, in their view, incoherent. Many such comments were made during the annual debate on the education budget. In 1963, Roger Souchal, a deputy for the Moselle who had resigned from the UNR over de Gaulle's handling of the Algerian question but subsequently rejoined it, claimed that if more resources were not devoted to education in the coming months, the UNR parliamentary group would refuse to support the next budget¹³⁶. At least 300 million extra francs were needed if the requirements of the country's educational institutions were to be met. The means he proposed to raise this money was a capital tax. If he did not feel bound as a member of the majority to vote the budget, in the name of legislative efficiency, it is possible that he would not have done so.

Achille Peretti spoke in 1964 of his dissatisfaction with the education budget of that year. He was prepared to accept that good work had been done, given the situation which had existed at the beginning of the decade, and would continue to support the government. Yet he also thought that the certainty of this support, far from eliminating the need for parliamentary scrutiny, made it more necessary than ever: “C'est justement ce soutien qui

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 386, 388.

¹³⁶ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 19 janvier 1963, p. 1266.

m'impose le devoir de dire ce qui ne va pas encore, tout en me réjouissant de ce qui va déjà mieux"¹³⁷. Such criticism would not take the form of a demagogic courting of popularity beyond the Assembly by questioning the basis of the administration's action, but would consist of helpful advice: "Mon ambition... se limitera à l'examen de problèmes concrets"¹³⁸. This is what the Gaullist deputies hoped to achieve; Peretti's comments concerned the problem of school buildings and the difficulties of acquiring new land for the construction of new schools. These were not issues likely to threaten the Education Minister's position in the government, yet they did represent deliberate attempts to express an opinion, and as such they illustrate the Gaullists' concern to make a useful contribution to debate in the Assembly. In this case, it was an example of a Gaullist deputy arguing that government was insufficiently committed to improving France's economic infrastructure, and calling attention to the need for more action in this domain. This was not always the argument of all the Gaullists; many were often more concerned to preserve that which already existed than to reform it.

Georges Becker, a deputy for the Doubs, took a similar approach in the same debate. Faced by the violent accusations of the Socialists and the Communists, his reaction was to stress the good work which the government had accomplished. He claimed that the improvements achieved in the French education system at both secondary and higher level were without precedent and without equal in the whole of Europe. He also took the opportunity to stress the degree of national unity which had been

¹³⁷ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 29 octobre 1964, p. 4136.

¹³⁸ *ibid.*

achieved as a result of the education reforms. They could thus be said to be truly Gaullist¹³⁹. Nevertheless, he was concerned about the lowering of standards in both *lycées* and universities, the lowering of salaries and a general feeling of malaise caused by low morale in the teaching profession. The government, Becker argued, could do more to maintain good relations with the profession. If reform were to be undertaken, then it had to affect all institutions, to effect a profound renovation, rather than being yet another partial measure which would only add to the confusion. So many inconsistent and incoherent measures had been introduced in the past forty years, he argued, that French universities were suffering from “une sorte de nausée pédagogique... elle ne sait plus ce qu'elle enseigne ni ce qu'elle doit enseigner ni pourquoi, ni comment l'enseigner”¹⁴⁰. Such comments reflected a widespread unease with the state of education, an unease which Education Minister Christian Fouchet must have hoped to alleviate with the reform he introduced in 1965. Many Gaullist deputies, however, believed that the measure was not what was required, and they did not hesitate to blame Fouchet for this.

The debate over this reform of 1965 provided another striking example of Gaullist deputies taking a Gaullist minister to task over the unsatisfactory work of his department. In most cases deputies were not concerned about the lack of reform but on its potentially negative effects on the status quo. Jean-Marie Poirier, a deputy for the Seine-et-Oise, ENS graduate and former teacher, opened the attack. He was particularly worried by the increased

¹³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 4146.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 4147.

specialisation the measure proposed. Those who chose to take a science-oriented *baccalauréat*, for example, would not be able to study any philosophy. He argued that the minister risked creating an extremely narrow focus for students and “de ne pas retrouver cet humanisme moyen qui, finalement, semblait plus précieux et plus profond”¹⁴¹. He approved of some aspects of the reform, such as the creation of the *Instituts de formation technique supérieure* and the new status of the *baccalauréat* as a diploma which guaranteed university entrance, but not of others, such as the decision to teach political economy to sixteen and seventeen year olds, which would leave little scope for the first year of university courses in political science and law. In addition, there appeared to be no guiding principle behind the reform, and no vision of the kind of citizen which the French education system wanted to create.

“Tant que vous ne nous aurez pas fait connaître vos vues sur ces questions, il nous sera difficile d'apprécier exactement la valeur de votre réforme... Sous toutes ces réserves, la structure d'ensemble est satisfaisante. Elle paraît devoir rester classique et former un moule capable de résister à l'épreuve du temps”¹⁴².

This kind of qualified approbation was characteristic of Gaullist speeches in Parliament. Deputies tended to congratulate the minister on his hard work, but nevertheless question some of its consequences. Such comments were usually ignored by contemporary observers, as they were felt not to alter materially the measure under consideration. Yet they did represent an

¹⁴¹ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 19 mai 1965, p. 1414.

¹⁴² *ibid.*, p. 1415.

attempt to make a substantial contribution to the development of policy. This case illustrates the attitude of a deputy wishing to preserve the best aspects of existing structures, put at risk by the government's insistence on reform. Although not inspired by a single clearly defined ideological goal, these comments indicated the desire of some Gaullists to ensure that their party was not a moribund parliamentary force. Frequently there was precious little evidence of enthusiasm for Baumel's vision of the modernisation of France, which was not particularly clear anyway. But there was at least an awareness, as Terrenoire's speech suggested, of the need to create a new kind of political discourse.

Many more Gaullists followed Poirier's example. Louis Buot, a deputy from Caen, criticised the lack of consultation that had characterised the drafting of the bill¹⁴³. This contrasted with the consultation process during the drafting of the Church schools bill in 1959. Alfred Westphal, a deputy for the Rhine, Jacques Mer, who represented the 7th *arrondissement* of Paris, Roger Dusseaulx (the former president of the UNR parliamentary group), and Raymond Zimmerman, deputy for Mulhouse in the Rhine, all joined him in expressing reservations about the bill, even though they congratulated the minister on the efforts he had made¹⁴⁴. The most detailed complaints came from Raymond Schmittlein, the well-known Alsatian deputy, who had been involved in Gaullism for many years. Schmittlein was worried by the huge numbers of students the universities were now required to cope with. On the

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 1434.

¹⁴⁴ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 19 mai 1965, pp. 1422-3, 1424-5, 1435-6 and 1441-2.

whole, the new regime had performed reasonably well in modifying the institutional arrangements for their education:

“J'estime que la V^e République a réalisé, dans ce domaine, un effort sans précédent et que, quoi qu'il en soit des critiques de détail, le progrès est manifeste, les résultats très satisfaisants et les lendemains prometteurs”¹⁴⁵.

He nevertheless considered that the French education system still suffered from trying to force students to absorb too much information. Fouchet's reform, in his view, did nothing to remedy this problem. It did not achieve the streamlining necessary to adapt education to the social and economic imperatives of contemporary France. The *baccalauréat* was still an examination designed for the elites of the nineteenth century. Fouchet appeared to realise this, but to fear contemplating the revolution essential to further development:

“Vous avez voulu, monsieur le ministre, tenir compte de ce fait. Je crains que vous ne soyez pas allé assez loin ou que vous n'ayez pas placé le pays devant le véritable problème”¹⁴⁶.

More students were attending the *lycées*, leading to larger classes and a lowering of standards. Attempts had been made to encourage weaker students to adopt an alternative curriculum in order to make numbers more manageable, but this effectively amounted to a system of selection, which went against the reform's proclaimed aim of a “democratic” education system.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 1438.

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 1439.

In addition, the *baccalauréat* itself was in need of change. The number of candidates (350,000) meant a huge number of scripts to be marked, and given the time allowed to get them done, no examiner was able to read them thoroughly. Schmittlein was disappointed that Fouchet had not touched “la structure vermoulue de l'examen”, adding that “il serait hautement désirable que l'on s'attaquât aux vices mêmes du baccalauréat et qu'on nous proposât une formule acceptable”. This deputy was clearly concerned by the lack of change this measure proposed. In fact, the minister had made matters worse by re-introducing September retakes, which made a mockery of the principle of the *baccalauréat* by implying that three years of work could be revised and absorbed in just a few months. Schmittlein was indignant: “Permettez-moi de vous dire très franchement que je trouve ça désolant”¹⁴⁷. Summing up, his praise for Fouchet's reform was underwhelming indeed:

“Vous avez fait un effort méritoire, monsieur le ministre, mais je crains que vous n'ayez essayé de trouver la quadrature du cercle en voulant concilier les inconciliables. Il vous faudra dans l'avenir aller plus loin dans vos décisions, être logique jusqu'au bout. Sinon le vin nouveau fera éclater les outres vieilles”¹⁴⁸.

The interventions of Schmittlein and his colleagues provided a good impression of how they interpreted the role of the majority. The tone of Schmittlein's comments suggests that he was disappointed the minister had not gone further; others, however,

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 1440.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*

were more concerned about the effect the reform might have on the positive aspects of the existing system. It was thus clear that the Gaullist deputies were not as a group proposing a coherent alternative platform for the reform of the education system. But by attacking particular aspects of this reform, they did give a clear indication of what they felt should be their role in the National Assembly. Criticism came in the form of detailed observations, condemnations of those remaining problems which seemed to undermine the objectives of the reform. It is thus not surprising that many observers were unimpressed, drawing attention to the unspectacular nature of some debates in the Assembly¹⁴⁹. Yet the fact that all such interventions were couched in polite parliamentary language and focused on concrete problems should not obscure the fact that the Gaullist parliamentary party was affirming its identity, and creating a function for itself beyond mere obedience to the publicly stated policies of the administration. It was making its presence felt. With so many deputies criticising measures such as this one, it was evident that the Gaullist movement was not represented solely by those in government. There were others, at different levels of the party, who intended to give Gaullism a distinctive voice.

Fouchet, in his reply to the speakers in the 1965 debate, accepted the deputies' right to object to the measures. He noted that reform necessarily gives rise to dispute:

“Il est en butte à toutes les critiques, celles des vrais conservateurs et celles de tous ceux qui auraient aimé changer, qui ont parfois échoué parce que c'était très difficile

¹⁴⁹ Even *La Nation* did this; see article by Annie Desgratioulet, 22 May 1963.

et qui cherchent à démontrer que le changement est impossible”.

He considered that the majority of deputies were in favour of his attempts at reform, since they were aware that some changes had to be made, though all maintained “2des réserves plus ou moins importantes”¹⁵⁰. “Certains appartenant à la majorité n'ont pas ménagé leurs critiques au projet et c'est tout à fait normal”. This was part of the code of parliamentary conduct which the Gaullist party intended to elaborate. It was the duty of the majority to speak out over initiatives with which it disagreed, not merely to support the government unthinkingly¹⁵¹. And just as the majority was allowed to criticise the government, so the opposition was allowed to agree with it: “D'autres, membres de l'opposition, n'ont pas hésité, au contraire, à exprimer leur accord sur certains points et je leur tire mon chapeau, comme on dit”¹⁵². All such comments were intended to maintain exemplary standards of parliamentary politeness and reasoned debate; something which the Gaullists argued had been absent from the National Assembly during the Fourth Republic. This was an atmosphere in which they believed Parliament could fulfil its proper function more effectively.

1965 was not the only year in which education caused controversy. The drama of May 1968, during which students occupied university buildings not only in protest at the conditions under which they had to study but also against the entire social

¹⁵⁰ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 19 mai 1965, p. 1442.

¹⁵¹ UDR deputy Valentino made a similar comment during a debate on overseas territories in 1967: “l'appartenance à la majorité ne peut conduire à cacher ce que l'on sait ni ce que l'on pense”. (*Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 2 novembre 1967, p. 4345).

¹⁵² *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 19 mai 1965, p. 1442.

system of which they believed education was the central pillar, made a re-examination of the universities inevitable.

After the elections of June of that year, the new majority of the National Assembly, 270 of whom were from the UDR, perceived its primary duty to be a thorough examination of the university system. Edgar Faure, the new Minister of Education chosen for his ability to work with people of varying political opinions, an arch-conciliator, had been working on draft versions of an education reform over the summer recess and deputies were keen to put their views to him. Considering the interventions of Gaullists during this period, it is easy to understand why de Gaulle was never enthusiastic about a huge Gaullist majority - so many spoke out that had he been personally in charge of drafting an effective bill acceptable to a majority of deputies, he would have had little room to manoeuvre. Tellingly, on this occasion many deputies were actually against the changes proposed by the government. As their comments show, they were worried about politicisation of the universities and many of them wanted some kind of selection for entry into institutions of higher education. They were not always inspired to speak up in support of the government's attempts to reform outdated institutions, as several did over the reform of 1965. Just as often they would speak in defence of institutions, such as universities, or people which they believed to be under threat. Gaullist deputies were motivated not by one single clearly defined ideological goal, but by a concern to make their voices heard and attack any measure which they believed to be dangerous. In this way, almost unintentionally, they provided a model of how democracy could function under the Fifth Republic.

Faure's reform was based on two main principles, the first of which was participation. Applied to the university domain, this consisted in giving administrative responsibility for each establishment to elected councils, where all members of the institution were represented. This included teaching staff, administrators and students. Previously, each faculty had been run by its own head of department, which had led to authority in the universities becoming rather scattered.

The second main principle behind the reform was that of autonomy of the universities. This gave them a greater freedom to decide what subjects should be studied and how study should be organised. An American-style system of credits could be introduced, giving students greater choice in what they studied. National examinations remained in place, however, limiting the amount of this new-found freedom that could be exercised by the universities, and financial autonomy was not included in the package, further restricting their liberty of manoeuvre¹⁵³.

Nevertheless this still proved to be more freedom than many Gaullist deputies could be comfortable with. One of the first Gaullist deputies to speak on education in 1968, David Rousset, attempted to create an atmosphere of co-operation and consensus.

“Dans l'oeuvre difficile et périlleuse qu'au nom du Gouvernement vous allez entreprendre, nous ne serons pas un obstacle. Nous ne vous tendrons pas d'embûches, nous ne vous attendrons pas au coin du bois pour vous abattre. Nous travaillerons à vos côtés, nous vous aiderons dans la mesure de nos moyens, nous ferons tout ce qu'il faut faire, sans réserve ni intention cachée, pour que cette entreprise

¹⁵³ Bernstein, *La république gaullienne*, p. 329.

d'une si grande valeur nationale réussisse, se réalise dans sa plénitude"¹⁵⁴.

Such conciliatory language was typical of many Gaullist speeches in Parliament. Rousset was something of a recent convert to Gaullism, having only joined the UDR very recently and was known primarily as a journalist. During the debates on the bill, it was those Gaullists who had been members of the UNR, the UNR-UDT and even the RPF who were most uncompromising in their condemnation of the government's education policy. As suggested earlier, longevity of adherence to the Gaullist cause was no guarantee of automatic consent to Gaullist government policies.

Many were unconvinced by the reforms Faure proposed. Alfred Westphal was clearly panicked: he claimed that although the extension of freedom of expression and of political association was a laudable aim, if the bill were accepted without modification, in two years' time all French universities would become centres for Communism of a Russian, Chinese or Cuban variety. More urgent was the teaching of courses which could actually help students to find employment when they left university¹⁵⁵. Many more UDR orators made similar comments to those of Westphal, arguing that Faure's bill was too generous in its willingness to accord "participation" at every level of university life. The most common feature of their interventions was an insistence upon the need for authority. While approving Faure's efforts to take account of legitimate grievances, they felt these should have clear limits, in order to avoid the potential for "anarchy" in the universities.

¹⁵⁴ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 3 octobre 1968, p. 3030.

¹⁵⁵ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 3 octobre 1968, p. 3020.

Roger Dusseaulx, a former president of the UNR parliamentary group and secretary general of the party at the time, felt that it was the duty of the majority to point this out:

“... que veut l'opinion? Nous sommes là pour vous apporter un avis en son nom, puisque vous nous demandez de fixer des orientations. Eh bien, l'opinion, tout d'abord, veut qu'il n'y ait pas de désordres à l'Université. Voilà sa première préoccupation”¹⁵⁶.

Implicit in this comment was the view that the government had handled the universities poorly during the decade. It had failed to maintain order. According to Dusseaulx, it had also failed to act on behalf of public opinion, which in his view wanted order in the universities. He was evidently trying to reflect the concerns of his constituents – something which Gaullists had already proved themselves able to do when it came to speaking up in defence of the rights of small farmers. Albert Liogier, a deputy involved in Gaullism for many years, echoed this point:

“le peuple français, en nous envoyant siéger ici, a fait connaître avec une netteté et une force extraordinaires sa volonté de réformes certes, mais aussi sa volonté de restauration de l'autorité de l'Etat dans tous les domaines et en particulier dans le domaine de l'enseignement”.

Some were determined to make the government listen to their interpretation of the voice of the people.

Many Gaullists, on this occasion, had their own opinions on the causes of the recent events, and were not afraid to express

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 3081-2.

them. In this case, Gaullists attempted to make practical suggestions as to how the education system could be improved. The solution Liogier proposed was an eccentric one: the lowering of the school-leaving age to fourteen. In this way he hoped to reduce the number of students who should never have attended university - the nucleus of revolutionary discontent seemed to him to be those young people who were simply not suited to a life of study. For those who left school at this age and wished to recommence studying later, adult education centres and techniques had to be improved. In making such comments, he claimed not to be opposing the government, but offering it his help. He outlined a notion of the role of the majority in this debate which was similar to that defined by Rousset:

“Nous comprenons, monsieur le ministre, les hautes difficultés de votre tâche et nous ne sommes pas là, croyez-le bien, pour les accroître, mais plutôt pour vous aider à les surmonter”¹⁵⁷.

Yet he was attacking the kind of reform being proposed by the government he supported. Such declarations were an important part of Gaullist parliamentary behaviour. Within a general context of repeatedly stressed loyalty, the deputies were able to speak more or less freely on many topics, education being one of their preferred objects of attention. It was a strategy which enabled them to remain committed to the Gaullist ideal of governmental stability while at the same time ensuring that Gaullism maintained a distinctive style of parliamentary activity.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 3071.

In this way they sought to bring their views to bear on the government's approach to policymaking. While the arguments used in debates such as those cited did not indicate the existence of a separate, coherent, alternative vision of Gaullism which was used as the basis for an onslaught on the government's policy, they were symptomatic of a broader discontent with official attitudes towards education and with the failure of Gaullist attempts to remedy this during the 1960s. The fact that the deputies made their suggestions illustrated that they felt they still had an important role to play, despite the reduced role of Parliament under the new republic. By consistently pointing out the flaws in government policy, they attempted to ensure that Gaullism was an active parliamentary force.

It is not clear why education became such a focus for their attention. It is perhaps most rewarding to examine this at an individual rather than general level. The concerns of Schmittlein, for example, are quite easy to explain; he was a former teacher, an *agrégé* who had begun his career at the University of Kaunas. After that, he had become director of the French Institute at Riga in Latvia. Having become involved in politics during World War II, as a lieutenant of de Gaulle, he became an RPF deputy in 1951 and president of the Assembly's education commission in 1955¹⁵⁸. It is thus not surprising that he took an interest in Gaullist education reforms. He was familiar with the problems associated with the French system and must have wanted to see Gaullism able to take the credit for its reform, as it already felt able to do with regard to the constitution.

¹⁵⁸ *Who's Who in France 1971-2*, Paris 1972, p. 1425.

Albert Poirier, another outspoken commentator on the reforms, was also a former teacher. He had worked in both the USA and in Ireland so had obviously been able to observe other education systems at first hand. His faith in the French system, however, unlike Schmittlein, appeared intact and he was more worried about protecting it than reforming it. Others who spoke out on education, however, such as Louis Buot, André Westphal, Jacques Mer, Roger Dusseaulx and Raymond Zimmerman, however, came from varied backgrounds. Both Buot and Westphal were former doctors, Mer was an overseas administrator, Dusseaulx was an agricultural engineer, while Zimmerman was a lawyer¹⁵⁹. So it was not merely those with a history of involvement in education who spoke out about it. The Gaullist concern with the issue must have run deeper.

At one level it must have been partly inspired by a desire to support the government's attempt at reform. As Schmittlein said, this was sorely needed if France were to possess an education system capable of meeting the demands of the twenty-first century. In this scenario, education was a vital part of bringing French society and the economy up to date; in order to run an efficient, well-organised, well-managed economic machine, the country needed an army of well-trained managers and businessmen. One of the main problems of French universities was that they were not producing graduates with this kind of training; too many were still following academic, literary courses which did not prepare them for work in the twentieth century economy. The number of students had gone up from 200,000 in

¹⁵⁹ *Who's Who in France 1971-2*, Paris 1972.

1960 to 500,000 in 1968, and many of these new students were studying literature-related courses; growth in numbers enrolled in faculties of letters was 50 per cent over the same period¹⁶⁰.

Unfortunately, the careers to which such studies led, teaching and the civil service, seemed less valuable at a time when sustained economic growth was bringing substantial benefits to the private sector. It was perhaps this imbalance, a potentially very significant problem to the new kind of economy and society Gaullism (at least as it was articulated by Baumel), which animated much of the criticism aimed at Fouchet by deputies such as Schmittlein, Becker, Peretti and Souchal.

At a different level, however, some of the criticism was motivated by a desire to preserve that which already existed. Gaullists such as Poirier were more worried about the potentially negative effects of reform than anything else. This was a concern which became even clearer in 1968, when French education appeared vulnerable to a takeover by extreme left-wing factions. In this case, more Gaullists spoke out against reform than in favour of it. Although Faure's reform was eventually voted by 441 votes to 0 (with 39 abstentions, six of which were UDR)¹⁶¹, it was done so grudgingly out of a desire not to openly disavow the president of the Republic. They believed that there should be order in the universities, whatever the reforming impulses of the government.

It seems that Gaullist criticism of the 1968 reform was not really the result of a particular passion for education, but of a desire to win a political battle with ideological forces opposed to

¹⁶⁰ Bernstein, *La république gaullienne*, p. 304.

¹⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 330.

Gaullism. In this case, it becomes possible to see their action as a part of the Gaullist mission as stated by the party leadership. Ideology and the 'old' political parties were finished; Gaullism had to inaugurate a new era of efficiency and productivity. An education system hijacked by left-wing factions would evidently prevent this aim, in the eyes of deputies. The universities would become another bastion of vested interest, like the political parties of the Fourth Republic, which would resist the reforming impulses of the state. In this sense, it could be that the Gaullist deputies were acting to preserve the role of the universities as effective training grounds for future managers of the economy. This was the role which education should fulfil. Maybe this was why so many of them appeared to care so much about education.

In addition, it could be that the Gaullist deputies wanted to reflect a broader unease with the education system that had not been dealt with by the government's reforms. As stated, student numbers had grown hugely, with lecture halls growing ever more crowded. The restrictions placed upon students, such as forbidding them to entertain members of the opposite sex in their rooms, seemed outdated and offensive. Discontent had been growing throughout 1968, culminating in the mass protest of the events of May. It was the reasons behind this mass protest which some Gaullist deputies wanted to fathom. It was symptomatic of a broader dissatisfaction with government attitudes to education which had persisted throughout the decade, despite the administration's reforming intentions. The deputies wanted to interpret and express some of the disquiet they saw outside the Assembly, in order to help the government deal with it.

Agriculture, along with education, was an issue which inspired many members of the Gaullist party to speak out against the government. This reflected the rural nature of many of the constituencies from which they came. If there was any general concern which ran through deputies' comments on the government's policies, it was a concern about the impact those policies would have on smaller French farms. Gaullist talk of 'modernisation' appeared in practice to pose a threat to an important way of life. During the 1960s, Gaullist deputies attempted to reflect the disquiet felt by many farmers at this prospect.

We have already seen how many members of the parliamentary group agreed to sign a petition along with many members of the opposition parties to demand the recall of Parliament in March 1960 to discuss agricultural problems. In debates throughout the 1960s, Gaullist deputies continued to associate themselves with criticism of agricultural policies drawn up by members of the opposition. Yet significantly many of them were often more concerned with defending existing structures than to support the government's changes. As noted, government policy was more heavily influenced by its contact with agricultural unions than with deputies. For many deputies, it attempted to change too much too quickly.

No doubt those who write about the years between 1958 and 1962 are justified in their assertion that these years were dominated by the Algerian problem. Yet there were other issues debated during the period. Louis Briot, a farmer from the Aube who rarely missed an opportunity to speak out in defence of the

rural population, was scathing about the government's attitude to the countryside:

“Excusez-moi, monsieur le ministre de l'agriculture, de poser cette question: Y a-t-il une politique agricole? Je ne le décèle pas, mais il existe une suite de textes, de lois, de décrets qui se chevauchent, se contredisent parfois et au milieu desquels tous les professionnels ont beaucoup de mal à trouver leur voie”¹⁶².

This comment illustrates the regime's inability to deal effectively with the rural world in the early years of its existence. One analyst, writing in 1962, argued that defining the principles of the government's agricultural policy was both a delicate and an ambitious undertaking. He added that during the eighteen-month period between June 1958 and December 1959, “les pouvoirs publics ont méconnu les problèmes paysans, n'ont défini aucune orientation générale”¹⁶³. The first worrying sign for the peasants came in August 1958, before elections had been held for the first Parliament of the Fifth Republic, when the administration proceeded to set the price of wheat without reference to the sliding-scale principle favoured by the FNSEA. Demonstrations against this were organised, but as Parliament was not sitting at the time, the FNSEA found that its effectiveness as a pressure group was now greatly reduced. With the old Assembly of the Fourth Republic now defunct and the nature of its successor still unclear, they did not know where to turn.

¹⁶² *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 23 juin 1959, p. 968.

¹⁶³ Y. Tavernier, “Le syndicalisme paysan et la politique agricole du gouvernement”, *Revue française de science politique*, September 1962, p. 623.

Worse was to follow. Late in December 1958, the new government headed by Debré issued a set of economy decrees designed to resolve the nation's financial crisis. Many of the controls and subsidies which had emerged in recent years were dispensed with, and it seemed that the main victims would be farmers and urban workers. The sliding-scale principle for setting farm prices was abolished. To many peasants, this seemed to be designed to force the modernisation of agriculture in the most painful way possible – lowering prices and driving all inefficient farmers off the land.

After a year of peasant unrest, Debré authorised a partial return to the sliding-scale principle for farm products, but limited by so many reservations that it was not welcomed. This kind of move added to the impression that the Gaullist government had no clearly defined policy on the countryside¹⁶⁴.

Some Gaullist deputies were quick to point out the lack of overall vision in the handling of agricultural problems by the Gaullist government. Briot's comments were echoed by another farmer representing the UNR, Gabriel de Poulpique, a deputy for Finistère. Like many others who came after him, Poulpique presented his criticisms as the necessary duty of the parliamentary majority:

“je crois qu'il est nécessaire que les parlementaires remplissent le rôle qui est le leur, c'est-à-dire fassent connaître au Gouvernement certains besoins du monde rural afin de l'aider dans la voie qu'il doit suivre pour atteindre le but qu'il s'est tracé”¹⁶⁵.

¹⁶⁴ Wright, *Rural Revolution*, pp. 156-8, pp. 163-4.

¹⁶⁵ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 24 juin 1959, p. 1036.

He was angered that more money had not been allocated to agriculture in the budget, which he claimed was desperately needed to create schools which could ensure an adequate training in agricultural methods as well as grants to pay for students to study there.

Another deputy who did not feel the government's actions were sufficient to ensure the well-being of the rural population was Roland Boudet, one of the deputies for Normandy, who frequently gave voice to the discontent of farmers. In the debate on a censure motion brought by the opposition to condemn the government's agricultural policy, in which members of the majority might be expected to support ministers unconditionally since the continued existence of the government was in question and Gaullists had sworn to uphold governmental stability, he was of the opinion that “l'attitude du gouvernement actuel a été quelque peu regrettable”. The sudden nature of the reforms passed had alienated those who worked the land. The government had failed to maintain good relations with farmers and prepare them for the measures. He argued that too much government intervention was being enforced, even speaking of a state “dictatorship”. The government's measures not only did not help farmers, but actually hindered their work; measures which he blamed on “des vues de l'esprit parfois trop technocratiques et, de ce fait, plus dangereux qu'utiles”¹⁶⁶. Modernisation as understood by the Gaullist government, using state power to bring about

¹⁶⁶ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 3 mai 1960, p. 588.

greater economic efficiency, did not always wear a human face and there were many Gaullists who could not see its benefits.

In a further debate on milk prices in 1961, Boudet was even more aggressive in his dissatisfaction with the Minister for Agriculture: "Les réponses que vous venez de nous faire nous inquiètent plus qu'elles ne nous rassurent..."¹⁶⁷. By July of that year, it was clear that his exasperation was complete. He accused the government of not listening to the views of rural deputies, claiming it did not understand the situation of farmers. The new regime was performing poorly: "nous sommes au bord d'une situation anarchique"¹⁶⁸. Given that he held such views, it is not surprising that Boudet eventually left the UNR in 1961, forming the *Parti libéral européen* as a platform for his views in Parliament.

His attack on Debré's governmental declaration of October 1961 revealed what he thought the problem of the Gaullist party was:

"Nous voulons bien collaborer à la rénovation nationale mais, pour nous, cela ne peut signifier une obéissance aveugle et de tous les instants".

This echoed the complaints of contemporary observers cited above. He was interrupted by several UNR deputies pointing out that he had been elected as a UNR deputy and that he should now resign and fight a by-election. He replied that he had shared the hopes of many in 1958 but considered that those in charge of the regime had betrayed the reforming spirit which had inspired its

¹⁶⁷ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 19 mai 1961, p. 897.

¹⁶⁸ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 7 juillet 1961, p. 1533.

creation. Rather than introduce real changes, “le pouvoir a préféré une oeuvre partisane de médiocre rafistolage”¹⁶⁹. Boudet's behaviour, along with that of the *Algérie Française* lobby of the UNR, illustrated the very real danger of division which existed for Gaullism. This was taking dissent too far, unreasonably so in the eyes of the deputies of the majority who forced him to leave the party. Boudet's comments contributed to political instability at a time when the government “was facing the most extensive and violent *jacquerie* that modern France has known”¹⁷⁰. He lost his seat in November 1962, but was elected for the *Centre Démocrate* in the same constituency in the legislative elections of March 1967. This illustrated that the attitude he had taken towards agricultural problems was one which found favour with his constituents. It was an example, albeit an extreme one, of how Gaullist deputies could resist change even if it came from a government they supported.

The opinions expressed by Boudet and others reflected the difficulties the government experienced in dealing with the agricultural world during the period between 1959 and 1961. This was a time of extended tension for Gaullism, as its administration had to face violent demonstrations and opposition. A mass meeting of 30,000 peasants in Amiens in February 1960 erupted into violence, with more than a hundred demonstrators and policemen injured¹⁷¹. In March 1960, the FNSEA published a letter to de Gaulle written by two of its members in its journal

¹⁶⁹ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 4 octobre 1961, p. 2380.

¹⁷⁰ Wright, *Rural revolution*, p. 167.

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 163.

L'information agricole. It couched the sufferings of peasants in dramatic language:

“Nous ne pouvons terminer cette lettre sans vous dire notre angoisse au moment où, placés dans une situation dramatique, les agriculteurs pourraient se laisser entraîner dans le désespoir”¹⁷².

In spring 1961, ballot boxes for the *élections cantonales* in Pont-l'Abbé in Brittany were seized by angry local farmers and destroyed. At the same time, in Morlaix in Brittany, agricultural workers occupied the sub-prefecture and erected barricades. Roads and railways were blocked. By July of that year, the disturbances had spread to the *Massif Central* and the south of the country¹⁷³.

One of the main reasons for these problems was the government's failure to implement the orientation law it had promised to implement after long discussions with the agriculture unions in 1960. The administration eventually moved ahead with this, installing Edgard Pisani as Minister of Agriculture to take responsibility for the changes, which included structural reforms and a health insurance scheme¹⁷⁴. The measure eventually produced under his stewardship, the *loi complémentaire* of 1962, was designed to reinforce the measure of 1960 and go well beyond it. In doing so, it leant heavily on many of the suggestions originally made by the CNJA in 1960 during the period leading up to the articulation of the orientation law. Firstly, it strengthened

¹⁷² I. Boussard, *Les agriculteurs et la République*, Paris 1990, p. 78.

¹⁷³ A. Moulin, *Peasant and Society in France since 1789*. Paris 1991, pp. 173-4.

¹⁷⁴ Wright, *Rural revolution*, p. 169.

the regional agencies which had been created, the SAFER, and accorded them a priority for the purchase of land placed on the market; as things stood, much land was being bought up by wealthy farmers or speculators before the SAFER could bid for it. The bill also established a *Fonds d'Action Sociale* designed to alleviate the condition of underprivileged groups and speed structural reform, and authorised the formation of producers' groups with the power to negotiate collective marketing agreements¹⁷⁵. Although subject to criticism from all sides of the political spectrum, and modified by a number of amendments (several of which limited the land-purchase priority of the SAFER), the bill eventually became law in August 1962.

Although rural discontent never again reached the levels of 1960 and 1961, it did re-emerge in 1964 and 1965. This was despite the FNSEA (which succeeded in absorbing many of the leaders of the CNJA after the vote of the complementary law) working in close collaboration with the government in implementing agricultural policy. In 1964, three months of negotiation with the government – including an audience with de Gaulle – failed to bring about any compromise that would alleviate the impact of the administration's austerity measures on the agricultural sector. The FNSEA, in response, launched a nationwide strike on milk deliveries for home consumption. This having generated no reaction from ministers, the FNSEA broke off relations with the government and in October 1964 appealed to Parliament for a motion of censure; the motion was proposed and although it was not adopted, it did gain 209 votes¹⁷⁶.

¹⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p. 171.

¹⁷⁶ Y. Tavernier, "Le Syndicalisme paysan et la Cinquième République: 1962-1965", *Revue*

Then in June 1965 the government announced that it was ceasing negotiations with Brussels, blaming disagreements over the Europe-wide financial regulation of agriculture. This annoyed the FNSEA, which had hoped for good news arising from the establishment of the Common Agricultural Policy. So that when Prime Minister Pompidou refused to discuss the matter with the union, and de Gaulle stated in a press conference of September that one of his main aims was to prevent the development of supranational institutions, the FNSEA national council issued a communiqué urging farmers not to vote for the General in the presidential elections of 1965¹⁷⁷. After the election, some blamed de Gaulle's failure to win the election outright in the first round of voting on the defection of a million and a half rural voters. This suggested that Pisani should be replaced, and so he was, by Edgar Faure¹⁷⁸. Faure proceeded to grant many of the policy concessions which the FNSEA had demanded in previous years¹⁷⁹.

Never again during the 1960s did the FNSEA resort to a full-scale "mobilisation of troops". This suggests that government co-operation with union leaders was functioning more effectively. Nevertheless, there were further violent demonstrations in 1967, when some farmers demanded a revision of the liberal orientation of French and Common Market agriculture to provide increased benefits for the disadvantaged regions and product specialisation, such as livestock raising. They condemned union co-operation with the Gaullist government as a form of collaboration designed

française de science politique, Paris 1965, pp. 878-84.

¹⁷⁷ Boussard, *Les agriculteurs*, p. 84.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 85.

¹⁷⁹ Tavernier, "Le Syndicalisme paysan et la Cinquième République", pp. 886-909.

to eliminate farmers who were less well-off. It seemed that the FNSEA had grown so close to official agricultural policies that it was no longer interested in supporting its members – this left the way clear for rival union movements to take the initiative in launching direct action against the government. One further burst of unrest emerged in 1969, after the devaluation of the franc, increased agricultural prices and restrictions placed on medium- and long-term loans for agricultural investment. Again, protest was often led by rival, more radical union movements opposed to the closeness of relations established between government and FNSEA¹⁸⁰.

It seems clear that the Gaullists attempted to reflect some of this ill feeling in Parliament. While the Assembly might have had less formal power than in the past, direct action by constituents could still have the effect of creating a climate of opinion which many deputies would do their best to reflect. In fact, their reduced role in the Fifth Republic, caused by the government's close collaboration with the CNJA and then the FNSEA, probably had the effect of encouraging them to side more openly with agricultural workers. As one analyst pointed out in 1962:

“Dans un régime parlementaire classique, les députés et les sénateurs jouent le rôle de frein, de d'écran face aux revendications paysannes. Ils s'en font les porte-parole, mais les atténuent. Ils rassurent les dirigeants, prodiguent de bons conseils, mettent du baume sur les plaies. Ayant perdu leur rôle traditionnel d'intermédiaires, les représentants de la nation sous la Ve République tendent au contraire à accuser les divergences, à se trouver 'du côté de la rue'”¹⁸¹.

¹⁸⁰ Keeler, *Politics of Neocorporatism*, pp. 78-81.

¹⁸¹ Y. Tavernier, “Le syndicalisme paysan et la politique agricole du gouvernement”, p. 612.

For all their support for the government, some Gaullist deputies were not immune to this tendency. Arthur Moulin, a deputy for the Nord region, was not happy with the way the *loi complémentaire* had been drafted – through discussion between government and agricultural unions, bypassing Parliament. His anger was clear:

“Avant d’expliquer le vote du groupe de l’Union pour la Nouvelle République, je voudrais marquer mon étonnement et aussi mon indignation contre certaines méthodes de pression d’abord, et d’information ensuite, qui présentent comme définitifs les textes en cours de discussion ou de navette ou, ce qui est plus grave encore, qui ont présenté comme valables des textes n’ayant pas figuré dans le projet déposé par le gouvernement”¹⁸².

During the debates, UNR deputies Collette, Degraeve and Moulin expressed a good deal of opposition to the bill and one amendment, proposed by Collette, attempted to suppress the SAFER’s right to buy land as soon as it came on the market¹⁸³. Nevertheless others, such as Laudrin, Hostache and Luciani spoke in favour of the project and it was voted through by the Gaullist parliamentary group. Moulin ended by congratulating the government on its work, although with reservations:

“Dans notre esprit, ce n’est pas une solution idéale, immédiate et totale des problèmes. Mais après l’oeuvre immense accomplie par le gouvernement de M. Michel Debré, avec l’appui d’une majorité de cette Assemblée, c’est

⁸² *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 28 juillet 1962, p. 2905.

⁸³ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 19 juillet 1962, p. 2620.

une étape importante sur le chemin de la parité qui est notre but à tous”¹⁸⁴.

It was not just deputies at this time who launched attacks on the way the law had been elaborated. Even the Gaullist party journal had already decided to devote its editorial to criticising Pisani's methods:

“Lorsqu’une voie est tracée et bien tracée, il importe à tous de la suivre, gouvernants et gouvernés. Et quelles que soient les idées ou visées personnelles de tel ministre, il vaudrait mieux s’occuper d’abord de textes décisifs dont les agriculteurs qui les avaient chaleureusement approuvés – goguenards – attendent toujours qu’ils soient mis en application”¹⁸⁵.

René Tomasini, deputy for the Eure and future secretary of the party, was another deputy who criticised the government's agricultural policies. He provided another example of how the Gaullists sought to use their position as government supporters to justify their criticism of decisions made by ministers. In the 1960 debate on agricultural reform, he pointed out many technical drawbacks of the proposed measures, while still affirming his support for the government's good intentions:

“quelque critiquables que soient peut-être, sur certains points, les projets du gouvernement en la matière, convient-il d'abord de se féliciter de ce que la représentation nationale se trouve enfin en présence de textes agricoles qui

¹⁸⁴ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 28 juillet 1962, p. 2906.

¹⁸⁵ *La Nation*, 3 July 1962.

constituent un ensemble cohérent et assez complet, à perspectives lointaines et à vues assez larges et vastes”¹⁸⁶.

Even within the context of a debate on a motion of censure (rejected the next day), certain Gaullists were clearly prepared to underline the fact that they had the right to suggest improvements to government policy, rather than using the opportunity to reaffirm their unconditional support for the government and stress the lack of any credible alternative.

Jacques Raphael-Leygues, a deputy who usually struck a loyal note in debates on foreign policy¹⁸⁷ and was rewarded with various foreign ministry posts¹⁸⁸ throughout the 1960s, did not extend this loyalty to the Gaullist approach to agriculture. In his concluding remarks in a speech made in the same debate as Tomasini, he sounded positively threatening:

“Vos réponses seront un test pour moi-même et pour certains de mes amis. En effet, de vos réponses dépendra notre vote, notamment de celles que vous donnerez aux questions que vous a posées M. Briot au sujet des prix agricoles”.

Such remarks gave the lie to popular assertions that Gaullists always voted for their government in Parliament without thinking about the issue under discussion. Nevertheless, suggestions that banks might be broken were moderated by professions of confidence in the ministry:

¹⁸⁶ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 4 mai 1960, p. 628.

¹⁸⁷ See for example *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 15 juin 1960, p.1326-8.

¹⁸⁸ He was vice-president of the National Assembly's Foreign Affairs Committee between 1959 and 1962 and ambassador to the Ivory Coast from 1963.

“Une presse malveillante laisse parfois entendre que le Gouvernement auquel vous appartenez¹⁸⁹ est constitué de technocrates qui rédigent des textes, trop de textes, disent certains, sans veiller à leur application. Je n'en crois rien: je suis persuadé qu'au contraire vous veillerez à l'application précise et minutieuse des textes en discussion”¹⁹⁰.

Yet it was clear that many deputies worried that the government might lose touch with the national situation and that it was their job to keep it in touch with popular sentiment.

Camille Bégué, a deputy for the Lot-et-Garonne, and Raymond Rétoré, representing Angoulême in the Charente, made similar comments in the same debate, praising the government's commitment to reforming agriculture but insisting that more action be taken. Bégué pointed out that the duty of the majority was to support the government and at the same time to suggest ways in which its policies could be improved¹⁹¹. Rétoré appreciated the measures but noted that they would take effect only in the long term; in the meantime, farmers had to find ways of maintaining a decent standard of living¹⁹². In this way Gaullist deputies maintained their independence. They did not offer a completely different vision of policy, but by criticising that which was offered to them and suggesting improvements they did ensure that the Gaullist parliamentary party had an independent voice. The Gaullists did succeed in making at least a minor

¹⁸⁹ Clearly Raphael-Leygues did not wish to identify himself with the government on this occasion.

¹⁹⁰ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 3 mai 1960, p. 590.

¹⁹¹ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 3 mai 1960, p. 596.

¹⁹² *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 4 mai 1960, p. 617.

contribution to government policy on agriculture in this period, through the work of the parliamentary party's *groupe d'études spécialisé*. It is true that the main direction of policy was determined by the government in co-operation with the agricultural unions. But the Gaullist deputies did at least make themselves heard. Their attitude deserves more attention than it has perhaps hitherto received. | x

The speeches indicated how Gaullists sought to fulfil the traditional role of deputies - that of forcing the government to account for its actions - but without preventing efficiency and swift decisions. They would complain, but not obstruct. This would remain the pattern of their comments throughout the decade. Jean Degraeve, one of the deputies for the Marne valley, spoke out in 1967 over the agriculture budget. He noted that French agriculture's profits had gone up from 3,569 million francs in 1959 to 11,432 million in 1967: "Je pense que c'est déjà un bilan positif, mais il reste beaucoup à faire"¹⁹³. He was mainly concerned about price rises. Christian Poncelet, a deputy for the Vosges, speaking two days later, pointed out that industrial growth was still excessively concentrated in the Paris region and that the department of Raymond Marcellin, the minister with responsibility for *l'aménagement du territoire*, had not done enough to attract businesses to provincial regions. Decentralisation was something the government appeared to preach but not practise¹⁹⁴. Such arguments from a deputy for the Vosges, one of the regions on the very edge of France, clearly illustrated a desire to communicate the views of constituents.

¹⁹³ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 18 octobre 1967, p. 3787.

¹⁹⁴ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 20 octobre 1967, p. 3905.

Gabriel de Poulpiquet, well known for his interventions on the subject of agriculture, was angered by the lack of money provided for grants for poor students. His speech was sarcastically interrupted by Socialist deputies pointing out that if Poulpiquet was not satisfied with the budget, he should vote against it. This, however, was unlikely: the Gaullist noted at the end of his angry intervention that “Je suis persuadé, monsieur le ministre, que vous saurez prendre les mesures nécessaires pour y remédier”¹⁹⁵. Whether he believed this or not is debatable, but it was by now so much a part of the way Gaullist deputies felt they should behave that it would have been immensely surprising had he not concluded his speech in this manner. His criticism was nonetheless valid, seeking as it did to reflect the concerns of electors.

The same concern not to sacrifice criticism of the administration on the altar of governmental stability characterised Gaullist interventions on most issues. Many of these occurred during the budget debate. The budget had always played a major role in French parliamentary life. It was the great legislative event of the parliamentary year, the chief occasion for criticising government policy and administration, and an opportunity for aggrieved interests to press their case on a ministry. So crucial was it to the survival of governments that it provoked half the votes of confidence in the Fourth Republic (before decolonisation had become the central issue, the proportion was two-thirds)¹⁹⁶. Its importance did not decline under the Fifth Republic. Although Gaullist deputies accepted the need to ensure swift passage for the

¹⁹⁵ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 26 octobre 1967, p. 4203.

¹⁹⁶ P. Williams, *Crisis and Compromise*, London 1964, p. 234.

budget, they did not miss the opportunity to criticise the government's policies.

Edouard Charret, a deputy for the Rhône, attacked aspects of the budget for 1960. He bemoaned the lack of vision in the government's housing project: Pierre Sudreau, the Minister of Construction, had made declarations concerning various areas of policy, but had made no effort to define the overall objectives of his ministry. Charret felt that deputies could not be satisfied with this.

“Nous aurions une bien piètre conception de notre rôle si nous nous bornions à 'éplucher' chapitre par chapitre, le budget de votre ministère”¹⁹⁷.

And without knowing exactly what Sudreau wished to achieve, it was impossible for deputies to judge the quality of the resources he had been offered. At the heart of this complaint lay the issue of accountability. If the parliamentary majority did not demand to know a minister's overall objective, then he could not be said to be accountable to Parliament for his actions. The Gaullists did not intend to ignore one of the Assembly's most important functions. As the editorial of the party journal said in 1963, “Les gaullistes ne peuvent se contenter de la gestion des affaires courantes”¹⁹⁸. Charret's comments confirm that this was a responsibility which the Gaullists took seriously:

“En intervenant dans ce débat, j'ai voulu dépasser les détails trop souvent agités au cours de certaines questions orales. Je

¹⁹⁷ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 23 novembre 1959, p. 2842.

¹⁹⁸ *La Nation*, 7 October 1963.

serais pleinement satisfait si vous vouliez bien saisir cette occasion pour définir devant le Parlement et, par voie de conséquence, devant le pays, les grandes lignes de force de la politique que vous entendez suivre au cours des prochaines années, tant en ce qui concerne le financement de la construction qu'en ce qui concerne l'aménagement du territoire"¹⁹⁹.

In attempting to force ministers clearly to define their objectives, Gaullists were asserting that they had a right to question those objectives. They felt that this was the duty of a deputy. Similar concerns lay behind the complaint of Pierre Bas, deputy for the sixth arrondissement of Paris, about the budgetary procedure itself. Parliament, he argued, had not been given the means to examine the budget adequately. And if Parliament could not do it, the government would have to institute mechanisms to do it effectively²⁰⁰.

Social issues also frequently moved Gaullists to criticise the government. We have already seen how Gaullists opposed the removal of the war veterans' state pension, and protested about the conditions suffered by farmers struggling to sell their products. In this way they sought to remind the government of its responsibilities towards those who had elected it. Louis Terrenoire urged the administration to look beyond "la raison froide qui découle des chiffres"²⁰¹. Gaullist deputies thus took seriously Chalandon's exhortations to express opinions about social and economic issues. One example of this approach was Henri Buot's speech on the 1966 budget. He was worried about the

¹⁹⁹ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 23 novembre 1959, p. 2843.

²⁰⁰ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 12 octobre 1966, p. 3344.

²⁰¹ See page 163.

government's unrelenting insistence upon austerity. He would have liked to see more relief for the poorer classes: "La rigueur avec laquelle vous tenez les cordons de la bourse ne doit pas exclure une certaine générosité envers les plus déshérités"²⁰².

Gaullists frequently insisted that human considerations should prevail over the understandable desire to balance the books. In a further speech from 1966, Parisian deputy Jacques Mer reminded the Minister for Social Affairs, Jean-Marcel Jeanneney, that there were

"des zones d'ombre dans la situation sociale de notre pays, malgré une législation sociale qui s'améliore de mois en mois. C'est d'ailleurs tout à fait normal, car il n'existe pas d'état de perfection, même dans une société qui se rapprocherait de la société d'abondance. Le devoir d'un parlementaire consiste à attirer votre attention sur ces zones d'ombre, sans qu'il fasse preuve nécessairement d'un esprit de critique systématique".

Mer was referring mainly to discrimination against older workers both within companies they worked for and when they applied for jobs, the safeguards against poor treatment being inadequate.

"Etudier la situation des plus déshérités - elle pose parfois les problèmes les plus complexes - et apporter des solutions humaines à ces cas souvent douloureux, tel est notre rôle"²⁰³.

This clearly represented an attempt to provide a voice for those who might struggle to be heard in the rarefied worlds of the Elysée or Matignon. Government might be more efficient and

²⁰² *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 12 octobre 1966, p. 3363.

²⁰³ *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, Débats, séance du 20 octobre 1966, p. 3620.

managerial, but this should not be at the expense of the well being of too many of the French people.

Examining the speeches made by the Gaullists in Parliament between 1958 and 1969, one may be tempted to concur with the disillusioned view of Eric Roussel, whose assessment of political life in 1962 was comprehensively dismissive. He argued that public debate was non-existent and blamed this on an omnipotent President, a divided opposition and “la docilité absolue d'une majorité répondant au doigt et à l'oeil, aux injonctions qui lui sont lancées par l'exécutif”²⁰⁴. Certainly at times some Gaullist deputies seemed to regard their role as occasionally visiting the *Palais Bourbon* in order to restate their absolute loyalty to President de Gaulle and the Government he had the right to appoint independently of them. It was easy to see why many concluded that debate never really took place at all on what were perceived to be the major choices facing France. These were decided by the President and a small group of advisers conspiratorially huddled together at the Elysée. They never seemed to be the object of public scrutiny. Interventions by deputies were thus relegated by the very nature of the system to peripheral, technical issues which never really enabled them to express a meaningful opinion on policy.

Pierre Viansson-Ponté, having observed this state of affairs for *Le Monde* throughout the 1960s as its chief political correspondent, concluded that the central political issues of the day had completely escaped the attention of Parliament²⁰⁵. This was because de Gaulle's system was designed to eliminate the

²⁰⁴ E. Roussel, *Pompidou*, Paris 1984, p. 162.

²⁰⁵ Viansson-Ponté, *République gaullienne*, Vol. 1, Paris 1970, p. 157.

importance of deputies, he argued. While the technical complexity of politics was on the increase, thus making public scrutiny of political affairs all the more essential, Parliament's influence on the actions of government had been fatally reduced. France was run by an oligarchy:

“les vraies discussions, quand il s'en produit, ne confrontent plus dans l'hémicycle la majorité et l'opposition, mais se déroulent à l'abri des regards, dans les réunions des membres de l'UNR ou de la coalition gouvernementale”²⁰⁶.

A more detailed and sympathetic look at what UNR, UNR-UDT and UDR deputies actually said and did modifies such harsh commentaries. We have seen that some Gaullists took their role in Parliament very seriously and did their utmost to reconcile the need for stability with the need for the government to be held accountable for its actions; they were aware of the new regime's commitment to making administrations last, yet this did not stop them from criticising those led by Gaullist colleagues. This was a style of government familiar to political parties in both the UK and West Germany. The activities of many Gaullist deputies showed that they believed Gaullism was not incompatible with some form of open dialogue. That their view was shared by many other Gaullists was illustrated by a 1964 editorial of the party bulletin, which highlighted the need for an active parliamentary majority:

“on commence à savoir, comme l'a dit un jour M. Pompidou, que la majorité donne bien du fil à retordre au gouvernement... En dehors même de l'opposition qui veille,

²⁰⁶ *ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 281.

comme il se doit, le point de vue des citoyens qui votèrent pour les candidats qui constituent aujourd'hui la majorité, est donc constamment représenté auprès du pouvoir"²⁰⁷.

Contemporaries continued to believe that criticism made by Gaullist deputies was deliberately confined to uncontroversial matters so as to avoid meaningful debates. But although the Gaullist parliamentary party would never be seen publicly disagreeing with the General's choices in foreign policy, for example, or the stated principles and general aims of the government, it would make its voice heard in debates on agriculture and education, and during the annual budget debate, where its interventions often consisted of substantive arguments, not merely trivial suggestions concerning minor details. The Gaullists did try to create an acceptable and useful form of parliamentary discourse, a kind of constructive criticism, within the context of the reduced role for Parliament brought about by the 1960s trend towards a neo-corporatist style of government.

That they did not succeed in convincing contemporaries, or analysts who have written about parliamentary Gaullism since then, is at least partly a result of the attitude of the Gaullist governments towards suggestions from their own political allies. Chapter Three showed how ministers such as Michel Debré were haunted by the memory of what they perceived to be the sins of the Fourth Republic and had a tendency to brand any criticism as "anti-Gaullist" and contrary to the spirit of the new constitution. It was their attitude which defined what Gaullism meant for many observers. The fact that the Gaullist deputies had promised to

²⁰⁷ *La Nation*, 10 January 1964.

uphold such a government meant that they shared the blame for this state of affairs. Matters improved when Pompidou became Prime Minister, but despite his more conciliatory approach, aversion to negative comments remained a feature of Gaullist ministers. Combined with a party which stressed loyalty, solidarity and discipline as the primary political virtues, this could only create an extremely unfavourable impression of the “new order” ushered in amidst such great hopes in 1958. A closer examination of the activities of the Gaullist deputies, however, does reveal that they did not altogether deserve the reputation they acquired.

CONCLUSION

The Gaullist parliamentary party was a much more complex group than has hitherto been accepted. This was in part a result of the diversity of political backgrounds among the deputies, as outlined in the first section of this chapter. Not all Gaullist deputies had similar pasts and not all had the same priorities. Some had been involved in the politics of the Fourth Republic; others had not. Some saw the Fifth Republic as an opportunity to create a new kind of political party, others did not. And some wished to support the General at all costs, while others did not.

In addition, the parliamentary party contained proud individuals who refused to let themselves be taken for granted. They did not want the government and the party leadership to force them into a passive, secondary role. There were also disagreements within the group, as the section on the early years of the Fifth Republic shows, and disagreements between members

of the group and the government. All such disagreements were communicated to the government by means of the channels described above: the specialised study groups, informal meetings between deputies and ministers and the National Assembly.

Lastly, the deputies clearly felt the pressure exerted by their constituents on key issues. That they intervened on subjects such as education and agriculture is perhaps no surprise. Both areas involved government policies which were bound to cause a degree of controversy. In education, Gaullist governments struggled to modify an outdated system that itself was struggling to cope with ever-increasing student numbers. In agriculture, they adopted policies which left them open to accusations of destroying the small farmer, still regarded as a crucial part of the French economy and national identity. On a number of occasions, it does seem that Gaullist deputies wished to reflect the unease of their constituents, dissatisfied with the progress of their farms or with the progress of their children's education. As Chapter Five will show, deputies often filled the pages of their local bulletins with news of how they spent time in Parliament defending the interests of the constituency they represented. They were keen to fulfil their role as representatives of the people, not in an abstract, demagogic way, as ideologically motivated deputies of the Fourth Republic might have done, but in a responsible way that would reflect the real concerns of their constituents.

Presented thus, it may seem surprising that the Gaullist parliamentary party during the 1960s was so often described as the unthinking instrument of de Gaulle's policies. "It exists purely to support De Gaulle" wrote Philip Williams and Martin Harrison in 1960, claiming that its function was "to be the finest mass of

brute votes in Europe”²⁰⁸. The main reason for such accusations was the sense of confusion engendered by the introduction of the institutions of the Fifth Republic. As Gaullist party leaders pointed out, the new regime was still finding its way. It aimed to create an entirely new political culture, one that would enable a necessary and advantageous departure from the French parliamentary tradition. There were many who were unprepared for such a transformation and who were frustrated that any attempt to question the new style was dismissed as a desire to return to the errors of the past. In comparison to the Fourth Republic, it did seem that public debate had been deliberately stifled by de Gaulle and his co-conspirators in the Elysée. This led to exaggerated contemporary accusations of “personal power” and “military dictatorship”.

In later years, the authors of such comments - most notably François Mitterrand - reconciled themselves to the Fifth Republic. As time passed and the tensions generated by the change of regime faded, the new institutions were more generally accepted as representing a reasonable balance between executive authority and democratic discussion. France gradually adjusted to a new political culture - one which owed a great deal to those Gaullist deputies who had attempted to make their voices heard in Parliament.

²⁰⁸ Williams and Harrison, *de Gaulle's Republic*, p. 217.

CHAPTER FIVE

GAULLISM AND THE LOCALITIES

SUMMARY

Like the Gaullist deputies, local branches of the Gaullist party have often been portrayed quite negatively in literature dealing with Gaullism during the 1960s. It has often been argued that local branches of the Gaullist party in the 1960s had little to contribute to Gaullism, either in theory or in practice. This contention is based on several points, perhaps the most important of which asserts that because de Gaulle saw the nation as the fundamental political unit, the party which supported him also found it difficult to look beyond national political priorities. It did not wish to develop strong local structures, fearing that these would become divisive influences that would detract from the party's national mission of helping de Gaulle restore France to *grandeur*.

This does not convey the whole story. Suggesting that local interests were intrinsically alien to Gaullism is perhaps another result of an excessive focus on General de Gaulle. His discourse, after all, repeatedly stressed the importance of France's role in the world as a nation and the importance of keeping its people united. However, the General's voice was not the only one articulating a vision of Gaullism. The technocratic doctrine of practical problem-solving defined by Jacques Baumel also provided an effective vision for justifying local initiatives, and some Gaullists did use it as a vehicle for the expression of local grievances. Similarly, only

an inquiry which limited itself to the formal arrangements of power within the party would conclude that Gaullists at the local level had nothing to contribute to Gaullism. Detailed examination of local Gaullist party newsletters, which attempted to articulate an interpretation of Gaullism which would be relevant for specific localities, modifies these assumptions about Gaullism. Although the attitude of the national party leadership towards the local federations and the way in which they were consequently organised undoubtedly limited their involvement within the party as a whole, there were many at the local level who did feel that they had something to contribute to Gaullism and were not afraid to say so. Local journals became an important outlet for the expression of Gaullist opinion, usually led by the local deputy. The attempts of these journals to offer an original perspective on Gaullism illustrated the complexity of the movement in its formative years and beyond.

The best way to interpret the development of the Gaullist party during the 1960s is in the context of the movement's broader ambition to create a new, more "modern", approach to politics. This originated with de Gaulle, who had long intended to remake French republican political culture. He wanted to give France a new vision of politics, more focused on the national interest and less on the special needs of specific socio-economic groups or those of particular localities. Partly in order to achieve this, he intended to break the role of parliamentary deputies as privileged intermediaries in relations between the locality and the government. In the General's mind it was exactly this which was responsible for the lack of a culture of national *grandeur* and the

corruption (as he saw it) of the late Third Republic. Squalid deals made over local interests obstructed national policymaking.

We have already seen how the Gaullist deputies attempted to contribute to the development of a new political culture. Ultimately, however, in their desire to play an active role in the new regime, they ended up playing the traditional role of a member of the Assembly – speaking up on behalf of constituents. This was one habit which the Fifth Republic could not break. The Gaullist party during the 1960s also reflected de Gaulle's desire to reinvent French republican political culture. Yet it too had difficulties achieving this. Initially, with a strong national leadership and a national mission that was closely tied to the policies of successive Gaullist governments, the party found it very difficult to support the development of strong local branches. There seemed to be little internal party democracy. During the early years of its existence, the party attempted to find different ways of reaching out to the nation. The first of these efforts was the construction of sectional economic groups, but these failed. The second was to construct a modern party organisation with officials in the locality who were not dependent on the deputy and who listened to guidance from the centre. In this way, the Gaullist leadership sought to change the nature of French political culture by creating a new mass-membership party, directed from Paris, in which local branches led by deputies would no longer have a privileged role.

This development was described by Charlot as the creation of a “voter-directed” party, less organised than either the traditional mass party or the *parti de cadres* as defined by Duverger

in 1958, but more focused on winning the approval of voters¹. It did not seek a mass membership which would restrict its flexibility and nor did it rely on deputies as the *cadres* responsible for transmitting its message in the regions. Instead it sought to reach out to the French people in different ways and create a new kind of party appropriate for the country's new regime.

However this attempt to reinvent French political culture was also a failure. Local structures never really developed in the way that the Gaullist leadership would have liked and, more importantly, parliamentary deputies eventually remained the lynchpins of the system. They continued to control the local groups and act as petitioners of the central government demanding special treatment for their locality and speaking up on behalf of their constituents. In that sense, the Gaullist attempt to create a new and more "national-minded" political culture was ultimately fruitless.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Historians and political scientists, basing their conclusions on the comments of contemporaries, have often argued that the "heroic" nature of Gaullism precluded it from any role in the more ordinary political issues of the day. Its policies were geared to the primacy of foreign affairs over all other activities of government. Gaullism concerned itself with the nation and its role in the world². This is, again, a conclusion probably caused by an excessive focus on de Gaulle. The General often adopted a pseudo-

¹ Charlot, *Gaullist phenomenon*; M. Duverger, *Les partis politiques*, Paris 1958.

² See for example McMillan, *Twentieth Century France*, p. 166; Hartley, *Gaullism*, pp. 303, 309.

monarchical stance of presenting his actions as working above and beyond the mundane trivialities of factional politics towards the great enterprise of national ambition and greatness³. The Gaullian political stage was the world, for political action and effort could only be conceived nationally. Foreign policy, in which national defence was included, was the palladium of the Fifth Republic, the shrine to the service of which the whole national effort was directed. De Gaulle's envy of Khrushchev, who was able to devote all his time to world affairs, seemed to confirm his preference for the global arena⁴. The Fifth Republic has been described in terms similar to those used by historians when discussing the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as an organisation created for and devoted to the pursuit of foreign policy. De Gaulle, an aspirant Metternich, isolated at the Elysée or Colombey, cared more for France than for the wishes of the French. His foreign policy was pursued for its own sake, his domestic policies being little more than the method of achieving the material means to fulfil it - like some sporting landlord who runs his estate with the main purpose of finding the wherewithal to enable him to hunt five days a week.

Such comparisons reflect much of the language used throughout literature on Gaullism. It is true, however, that de Gaulle, like the Habsburg monarchy, pursued a foreign policy designed to offset internal divisions⁵. De Gaulle's awareness of the divisions within French society inclined him to concentrate his energy on those spheres of government that united rather than divided the French people. Foreign policy was an obvious

³ Williams and Harrison, *Politics and Society*, p. 378.

⁴ de Gaulle, *Le renouveau*, p. 246. See also p. 46 of this thesis.

⁵ Larkin, *France since the Popular Front*, p. 309.

example, since it focused attention on the common interests of the French, clearly different from those of other peoples. In this sense, one may agree with those persuaded that the politics of *grandeur* were designed more for domestic than for foreign ends⁶.

Indeed it was not only the French people at large whom de Gaulle sought to unite. More specifically, a focus on foreign policy was a vital means of bringing Gaullists together. As we have already seen, other areas of policy brought them into conflict. The diplomacy of the Fifth Republic was the principal banner around which Gaullists could assemble. This fact was, of course, hardly coincidental: nationalism invariably defines itself most clearly vis-à-vis foreign competitors. This was also the main area of policy in which the Fifth Republic differed most strikingly, in both style and content, from the Fourth, thus enabling the Gaullists to present their project as a radical new departure.

Such interpretations have often relied upon the comments of contemporary journalists. They strongly attacked this aspect of de Gaulle's political style. Pierre Malot referred in 1966 to de Gaulle's "mépris affiché de l'intendance, son ignorance du quotidien, du vulgaire et du subalterne"⁷. Robert Aron wrote in 1961 that he had the feeling that de Gaulle tended to see things and people in the same perspective, which was the perspective of an aeroplane flying at high altitude⁸. Many journalists sought to show that de Gaulle, and consequently the Gaullists, were too busy thinking about France to concern themselves with the views and

⁶ This is the central argument of P. Cerny, *The Politics of Grandeur: Ideological Aspects of de Gaulle's Foreign Policy*, Cambridge 1980.

⁷ *Combat*, 2 November 1966.

⁸ R. Aron "The Political Methods of General de Gaulle", *International Affairs*, Vol. 37 No. 3 (January 1961), p. 22.

aspirations of ordinary French people. This accusation was frequently made during the events of May 1968⁹.

However, to dismiss Gaullism as “Depoliticisation in domestic affairs, plus a foreign policy”¹⁰, or “Stability at home, activity abroad”¹¹, as some have chosen to do, is not sufficient. We have already seen in Chapter Three the way in which national party leaders attempted to develop Gaullism into a distinctive approach to domestic affairs. This chapter will add to this portrayal of the party by showing that despite the apparently sketchy nature of local federations, Gaullism also gradually began to address itself to local politics.

De Gaulle's dislike of interest groups undoubtedly posed a problem for those Gaullists committed to defending local interests. It made it difficult for them to present themselves as representatives of a particular locality. The traditional role for the deputy within the French republican political culture was to obtain special treatment from the central power for his constituents. Yet according to de Gaulle and his collaborators, the national interest was of paramount importance. If Gaullism always aspired to transcend the divisions which fractured French society, it had to view the goal of forging the social and political unity of the French nation as a categorical imperative. Gaullists should not be interested in people insofar as they represented a particular *locality*; only in their capacity to act as citizens of the French *nation*. As Debré wrote in his memoirs,

⁹ Shennan, *De Gaulle*, p. 116.

¹⁰ Hayward, *One and Indivisible*, p. 227.

¹¹ Williams, *Politics and Society*, p. 42.

“Un pouvoir qui se veut indépendant doit toujours s'appuyer sur un sentiment populaire et patriotique contre des corporations et des notables que guident le plus souvent les préoccupations personnelles...”¹².

This did not seem to allow a great deal of scope for Gaullists to campaign on behalf of local concerns. Gaullism always contained within itself a potential conflict between a policy of *grandeur* and a policy of *interests*. Even de Gaulle himself could not decide the debate purely in favour of *grandeur*. France's immediate *interests*, for example, might have dictated that it should remain within the European community on economic grounds, whereas de Gaulle's own instinct for the grand gesture might have led him to favour withdrawal. Yet as we shall see, other elements of Gaullism, such as the stress upon urban development and modernisation as an essential part of national greatness, were to permit the articulation of local grievances in a distinctive way. This enabled Gaullism to remain meaningful even in the most apparently undramatic and provincial setting. The activities of deputies and their associates were to ensure that Gaullism was responsive to local problems. This is an aspect of Gaullism which has perhaps been rather underestimated as a result of the excessive focus on General de Gaulle. The present chapter intends to attempt to redress this imbalance by highlighting the variety and complexity of Gaullism in the localities. In so doing, it highlights the inability of the national party leadership to create the more “national-minded” organisation it had hoped for.

¹² Debré, *Gouverner autrement*, p. 40.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE GAULLIST PARTY

The reason for the apparent inactivity of the Gaullist party's local federations, much commented upon by previous analysts, was not that its whole approach to politics tended to deny the importance of local affairs. More important in determining the national leadership's unwillingness to develop the importance of its local branches was its desire to be different from other parties and to minimise the influence of *Algérie Française* sympathisers. If there was nothing more to the Gaullist party than the number of its members and the formal activities of its local branches, certainly one might be tempted to conclude that it was not a party which foresaw a significant role for its activists. In 1959 the Gaullist party had barely more than 25, 000 members; in 1960 it had 35,000; in 1961, 50,000; in 1963, 86,000¹³. The Communist party, in contrast, issued 407,000 membership cards in 1964 and 425,800 in 1966¹⁴. Local federations did not distinguish themselves by their activities, usually choosing to focus upon the organisation of the local deputies' election campaign and the preparation of candidates' handbooks¹⁵. Commentators have used such evidence to conclude that Gaullism during the 1960s was a weak movement¹⁶. Although it is understandable, such a view does not do justice to those Gaullists who felt that they had something to contribute to Gaullism and made determined attempts to do so.

¹³ Charlot, *L'UNR*, p. 116.

¹⁴ M. Adereth, *The French Communist Party, a critical history (1920-84)*, Manchester 1984, p. 291.

¹⁵ Charlot, *Le phénomène gaulliste*, p. 130.

¹⁶ F-G Dreyfus, *De Gaulle et le gaullisme*, Paris 1982, p. 255.

Some have claimed that the Gaullist party was simply not interested in cultivating local strongholds. They argue that, as a movement which believed so strongly in national unity, the party stipulated that minor officials should do as they were told by the national leadership¹⁷. In reality, the party's shortage of members was just as much the result of the prevailing circumstances during the early years of the Fifth Republic as it was a consequence of the national focus of the Gaullist movement. The UNR leadership was initially extremely wary of developing strong power bases in every *département*, largely because so many Gaullists were sympathetic to *Algérie Française* and were thus regarded with suspicion by party administrators. Party leaders were nervous of the potential for division within Gaullism and were determined to maintain party unity at all costs. This created a precedent for neglecting the grassroots which Gaullism found difficult to overcome. It was a matter of great pride to many Gaullists that their party had not been destroyed by internal dissent. Instead, those who rejected de Gaulle's Algerian policy had been expelled. Such individuals should not be regarded as true "Gaullists", Louis Terrenoire told the local federation of Poitiers in 1962¹⁸.

Once the trauma of the Algerian period had dissipated, however, some Gaullists began to reassert themselves. Although a high priority was still placed on party unity behind de Gaulle in speeches made by party leaders, there was no pressing reason to enforce this as strictly as before. As will be illustrated, some Gaullists, often following the example set by their local deputy, grew in confidence and began to express themselves more freely.

¹⁷ Charlot, *L'UNR*, p. 129.

¹⁸ *La Nation*, 1 March 1962.

In addition, the attitude of the party leadership towards local politics changed significantly during the decade. Just as the Gaullist party came to recognise that it needed an efficient system of party organisation in order to survive after the departure of General de Gaulle, so it gradually accepted the need for strong local bases to support its electoral campaigns.

As the next section intends to show, the party's initial organisation was deliberately designed to prevent the development of powerful local strongholds. In this way it sought to be a different kind of political movement, one which reached out directly to the French people rather than building up its own organisation. There would be no privileged intermediaries in relations between party and people, in accordance with the party's desire to participate in the formation of a new kind of political culture.

The party's failure to make significant progress in the municipal elections of 1965, however, indicated that this strategy had to change. As a result, Gaullism also changed. It began to address itself more clearly to specifically local problems. The need for electoral survival made this an imperative.

The initial structure of the UNR

The initial arrangements for the organisation of the UNR illustrated well the party's reluctance to create powerful local federations which might become potentially divisive influences within the movement. The party preferred to concern itself with communicating its ideas to different strata of society, rather than developing local power bases. One of the motions passed at the *assises* of Bordeaux in 1959 insisted that Gaullists should not

concentrate purely on party affairs, but reach out to other organisations, such as trades unions and professional associations, and inform them of Gaullist ideas. In this way the party could develop “une politique rationnelle des relations publiques”, a method of maintaining a constant dialogue with voters and showing them what Gaullism could do for them¹⁹. Such an approach signalled the Gaullist party's desire to conduct its affairs differently from the parties of the Fourth Republic, in a manner well suited to the new political environment created by the Fifth Republic. André Roulland, one of the party's deputies, reporting on the party's organisation at the Bordeaux *assises*, encouraged Gaullists to be aware of the limitations of the old-style political party, even one which was impeccably organised, and to remain open to non-Gaullist views²⁰.

Similarly, secretary general Albin Chalandon did not want Gaullism to become synonymous with an inward-looking political party, exclusively concerned with its internal procedures. He neglected the local federations and the national council, where meetings of supporters might have attempted to formulate opinions and policy, preferring round-table meetings and working groups involving non-party experts to discuss specific issues such as wages, *l'aménagement du territoire* and the national economic situation²¹. One such meeting took place after the municipal elections of 1959 and included many notable personalities from the

¹⁹ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, special edition on Bordeaux *assises*, November 1959.

²⁰ André Roulland, “Rapport sur l'organisation générale”, *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, special edition on Bordeaux *assises*, November 1959.

²¹ See for example his articles “Diagnostic et thérapeutique de la situation économique actuelle” in the *UNR bulletin de presse*, special edition, 27 May 1959, and in *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, October-November 1959.

business world, such as Pierre Dreyfus, Managing Director of Renault, Roger Gaspar, Director of *Electricité de France*, André Malterre, President of the *Confédération générale de cadres*, and Emile Bollaert, President of the *Compagnie Nationale du Rhône*²². In this way he sought to develop a more technocratic and practical approach to politics, avoiding internal debates on matters of principle and concentrating on solving the difficulties that confronted France. As a result, the development of the local federations of the Gaullist party was not given a great deal of attention.

This continued to be the case after Jacques Richard became national secretary general at the end of 1959. The party's organisation changed in nature but not in inspiration. He chose to reorganise the party's activities along the lines of those of the RPF by relaunching *Action ouvrière*, *Action agricole* and the national committees for public service, commerce, artisans and the young. This strategy was designed to broaden the appeal of the Gaullist party in a distinctive way, one which reached out to the French people rather than concentrating on internal party affairs. The fact that he did this serves as a clear illustration of the Gaullist party's unwillingness to develop strong local bases in its early years. It did not wish to appear too "political" in the sense of being excessively interested in its own private disputes and in the defence of particular local interests. The UNR preferred to appeal directly to different social groups and explain what it could achieve for society as a whole, not for particular localities.

²² *Le Monde*, 24 March 1959.

Action ouvrière, one of the main organisations seeking to broaden the appeal of Gaullism, did not seek to become an organisation parallel to the party - its members were instructed to accept the authority of the local UNR secretary general in the *départements* in which they were operating²³. Nor did it try to compete with the trades unions; its objective was simply to “témoigner dans le monde du travail de l'idéal gaulliste”²⁴. Its meetings were attended by ministers and during Michel Debré's premiership these were frequently held at the Prime Minister's residence at Matignon²⁵. Its leaders were all deputies concerned by the social policy of Gaullism, inspired by de Gaulle's vision of the association of capital and labour and seeking to communicate this to French workers. Later, the group preferred to define its purpose more generally as “promotion sociale”²⁶. Some of those involved in *Action ouvrière* had many useful contacts. At the RATP, for example, deputy Guillemin was well known, as was deputy Calmejane within the Civil Aviation Service of Nanterre, Noisy and Romainville. Members of *Action ouvrière* were also present in United Banks, the Department of Social Security, Hispano and Nord-Aviation as well as in various companies in many *départements* such as the Var, the Saône-et-Loire, the Aveyron, the Puy-de-Dôme, the Meuse, the Nord and the Calvados²⁷. The influence of *Action ouvrière* could thus potentially be wide-ranging.

²³ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, October-November 1959.

²⁴ Jean Bernasconi, “Le rapport de l'Action ouvrière”, *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, special edition on Stasbourg *assises*, 17-23 March 1961.

²⁵ See *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 4 March 1960, 21-27 October 1960 and 15 November 1961; see also *La Nation*, 8 April 1963 and *Le Monde*, 6 January 1961.

²⁶ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 15 November 1961.

²⁷ Groups all cited for their campaign in favour of a “Yes” vote in the January 1961 referendum (*Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, January 1961).

The bulletin of *Action ouvrière, L'espoir des travailleurs*, was created in October 1959. Its pages bear witness to the dynamic vitality of Gaullism. Its first issue used ambitious language. An editorial by Albin Chalandon spoke of the social democracy which would be established by General de Gaulle, “l'homme des grandes réformes sociales”. Another article stressed that social progress could only mean an improvement in the living standards of all, especially workers. This entailed a profound renovation of French social and economic structures and the establishment of a system for the national redistribution of wealth, which, the journal claimed, had always been one of the UNR's primary objectives²⁸. *Action ouvrière* evidently had its own vision of Gaullism. It was frequently implied that the UNR should not be identified exclusively with de Gaulle's ministerial team: Chalandon wrote that “l'UNR pourra *faire triompher ses vues* au sein du Gouvernement de la V^e République”²⁹. At the *Action ouvrière* conference held at Asnières, he spoke of the UNR's power to “agir sur le gouvernement”³⁰, all of which suggested that the organisation would be an independent pressure group bringing its views to bear on the Gaullist administration. In this way, it sought to maintain its own voice and make a distinctive contribution to Gaullist policies.

The language used in *L'espoir des travailleurs* bears witness to this ambition. Jean Bernasconi, deputy for Montmartre, argued in 1960 that the time had come to distribute the profits of “France

²⁸ *L'espoir des travailleurs*, 15 October 1959.

²⁹ *ibid.* Italics added.

³⁰ *ibid.*, 15 November 1959.

plc" among those who actually produced them³¹. Now that the country's economic situation had been stabilised, those in power could afford to relax the policy of austerity which had been in force since 1959. In 1961, an editorial stated that the government had done enough talking, and that the time had come to act by introducing measures of social reform, while in the same issue Bernasconi noted that "Le gouvernement a amorcé une politique sociale, il ne suffit pas de l'amorcer il faut la poursuivre hardiment"³². By this time it had become evident that the government's rhetoric of social progress would not necessarily be supported by policies. This was a discouraging realisation for those who had hoped to ensure that their vision of Gaullism would prevail upon the government. By 1963, the journal had begun to limit itself to reprinting speeches made by prominent party figures³³, recording questions Bernasconi and Calmejane had asked in Parliament³⁴ and publishing general articles on issues of interest to workers, such as safety in the workplace³⁵, without seeking to adopt any particular stance. The notion of *Action ouvrière* forcing the government to take account of workers' interests seemed a distant memory. Even *Le courrier de la nouvelle République* could not summon any enthusiasm for the group's activities, describing one of its meetings held at Poigny-la-Forêt as

³¹ *ibid.*, 15 May 1960.

³² *ibid.*, March 1961.

³³ For example a speech Pompidou made in the National Assembly on 14 May 1963 (*ibid.*, June 1963).

³⁴ Bernasconi asked a written question to the Minister of Education about schoolchildren being refunded for school meals they had not obtained as a result of industrial action by kitchen staff (*ibid.*, June 1963) and Calmejane had asked several concerning medical tests for older drivers, income tax and the free home delivery of old age pension payments (*ibid.*, July 1963).

³⁵ *ibid.*, February-March 1964.

arid, technical and excessively focused on statistical analysis³⁶. Yet the articulation of Gaullist ideas about social and economic policy continued, in the pages of the UDT journal *Notre République*.

Although *Action ouvrière* ceased to exist as a part of the Gaullist party in 1964, it had played an important role during the early years of the Fifth Republic as a vehicle for the articulation of a distinctive vision of Gaullism. Although its actual impact on policy may have been limited, it had been a valuable forum in which different ideas about Gaullism had been forcefully expressed. Although it was dissolved as part of the reorganisation of the party, those involved in it had done their best to make a contribution to Gaullism during the early years of the Fifth Republic.

A separate group, *Action agricole*, was created to deal with the rural environment. Its aims were similar to those of *Action ouvrière*. It sought to follow Chalandon's lead in organising round-table meetings, which would be convened to discuss the role of agriculture within the economy. The report on the group's role given at the party's second *assises* stressed that these meetings would be open to all the "éléments moteurs" of rural activity in the locality³⁷. In this way the party sought to reach out to the French people, rather than concern itself only with its own members. Rather than using abstract ideas to attract new supporters, the party offered practical solutions to clearly-defined problems. A circular issued by *Action agricole* on 14 October 1960, for example, explained how to create a co-operative or a *Société*

³⁶ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 15 November 1961.

³⁷ Pierre Beylot, "Le rapport de l'Action agricole", *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, special edition on Stasbourg *assises*, 17-23 March 1961.

d'intérêts collectifs agricoles (SICA), proposed visits from a specialist from the meat and cattle co-operative centre and instructed local Gaullists involved in agriculture to designate a director of any eventual SICA, “dans le double intérêt de l'UNR et de l'agriculture”³⁸. The number of *départements* possessing an agricultural representative, however, declined between 1961 and 1962³⁹, so that *Action agricole* was eventually incorporated into the specialised study group for agriculture in the National Assembly⁴⁰. It succeeded in making distinctive contributions to policy debates by publishing a number of tracts, one of which, published in September 1961, condemned the opposition's walkout staged at the National Assembly in protest at the government's agricultural policies⁴¹. In addition, it helped to produce special editions of *La Nation*, such as that of October 1961 which contained a summary of the Fifth Republic's achievements in agriculture⁴², and prepared special campaign leaflets for rural areas for use by candidates in the legislative elections of 1962, 1967 and 1968. It also provided material for de Gaulle's presidential campaign in 1965. The group evidently felt it had a contribution to make to Gaullism.

The committee for commerce and artisanry also eventually became part of the parliamentary study group for that domain, largely because it was organised by the same man who ran the group, Jacques Malleville. Its activity thus consisted of regular

³⁸ Circular of 14 October 1960, *L'Action agricole*, Institut d'études politiques de Paris.

³⁹ There were 65 recorded in a UNR circular of 14 February 1961, yet only 54 sent representatives to the *journées d'action agricole* held at Vanves in March 1962 (*Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 15 March 1962).

⁴⁰ See Chapter Four discussion of specialised study groups.

⁴¹ “Agriculteurs vous êtes exploités”, Institut d'études politiques de Paris.

⁴² *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 6 October 1961.

contacts and discussions with unions and professional organisations, with a view to preparing reforms. In this way it sought to influence government policy. This influence was, however, restricted to the capital; local representatives were relatively inactive, only ever organising one meeting, in Marseille on 10 March 1960⁴³. In January 1963, André Valabrègue, a former vice-president of the National Assembly and leading member of the study group for commerce and artisanry during the preceding Parliament, took over the committee, but his circulars requesting the designation of local representatives went unanswered. This illustrated the difficulty of using this kind of organisation to spread the Gaullist party's influence. Although those involved did attempt to make a contribution to Gaullist thinking on the subjects with which they were concerned, the impact of their activities at the local level remained limited. Although there was evidence of a desire to influence government policy and articulate a vision of Gaullism, this tended to remain a Parisian affair. This is why these organisations were ultimately replaced by the local federations as the focal points of the Gaullist party's activity.

The section of the Gaullist party devoted to youth affairs, organised by Bertrand Flornoy, was initially extremely ambitious. In May 1960, Flornoy spoke of a special “plan de Gaulle pour la jeunesse” which would assume responsibility for the co-ordination, drafting and implementation of all measures deemed necessary by government ministries or other organisations concerned with young people and affirmed that a project for a High Committee for Youth Affairs had been submitted to Prime

⁴³ “Le rapport de Jacques Malleville”, *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, special edition on Strasbourg *assises*, 17-23 March 1961.

Minister Debré and President de Gaulle⁴⁴. By October 1960 the emphasis had switched from a “plan de Gaulle” to a “plan national pour les jeunes”, from a High Committee for Youth Affairs to a “Permanent Youth Committee” containing UNR members only. Created in July 1960, this committee consisted of about twenty UNR deputies and twenty representatives of young members. When it met, it drafted a manifesto⁴⁵. Although the impact of this group was limited at the local level, and its activities short-lived, it was a valuable focus for the identity of the Gaullist party. Those involved did want to contribute ideas to Gaullism.

The youth section's journal, *L'Espoir des jeunes*, concentrated on the national political issues of the day. Articles focused on participation, the French Community, Algeria and European affairs⁴⁶. Unfortunately secretary general Richard refused to subsidise the efforts of the party's youth wing and although Flornoy did succeed in obtaining two representatives for young people on the party's central committee, he decided to abandon all activities at the end of 1962. The reason for the party leadership's neglect of young people was partially that many of them had strong links with the *Algérie Française* group. At the time of the referendum on Algeria in January 1961, five of those involved or previously involved in the party's youth wing resigned from the party over de Gaulle's Algerian policy⁴⁷. Examining the comments

⁴⁴ Circular of 19 May 1960 signed by Flornoy, who claimed in his report to the Strasbourg *assises* to have obtained encouragement from de Gaulle on this matter. See *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 11-17 June 1960.

⁴⁵ “Le rapport de Bertrand Flornoy”, *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, special edition on Strasbourg *assises*, 17-23 March 1961.

⁴⁶ *L'espoir des jeunes*, March 1959, April-May 1959, February 1960 and July-August 1959 respectively.

⁴⁷ *Le Monde*, 8-9 January 1961.

of Jacques Richard, another reason for his neglect of the party's youth wing seems to have been that the older Gaullists were simply suspicious of the younger generation. He suggested that the youth section of the UNR did not understand Gaullism, arguing in 1961 that the party had to work on a coherent definition of political Gaullism for those adolescents, born after the end of the Second World War, who had grown up under the climate of the Fourth Republic. While the meaning of Gaullism was perfectly clear for all those UNR officials who had experienced the war and the Resistance, it could not be so for this younger generation⁴⁸. As the decade progressed, however, this generation was to redefine Gaullism. The views of Gaullists such as Richard were gradually marginalised as the party invented a role for itself which went beyond uncritical acceptance of the General's leadership.

The UNR, as already seen in chapters three and four, was a lively, complex force in its early years. There were many Gaullists who were eager to contribute to the party's activities and ideas in some way. The party's internal organisation did not always enable them to do this directly. The impact of the groups described above, despite the willingness of those involved in them, was limited. Although they contributed to Gaullism in varied ways, they did not seem to greatly facilitate the development of a strong national party. The Gaullist strategy for creating a new kind of political movement, appropriate to the new culture created by the Fifth Republic, was not working. It was the gradual recognition by the party leadership of the ineffectiveness of this strategy which led to the acceptance of the legitimate role of the local federations

⁴⁸ Jacques Richard, "Rapport sur l'organisation et les affaires internes de l'UNR", *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, special edition on Stasbourg assises, 17-23 March 1961.

and their eventual emergence as vital links in the party's organisation. The trauma of the Algerian period had initially caused the party leadership to neglect the local federations and to use different methods of communicating its message to the French people - methods which had the additional advantage of enabling the party to present itself as fundamentally different from other political parties. With time, the UNR accepted the need for active local federations. Yet it was still concerned to avoid divisions, and attempted to maintain close control of the federations, as the next section will show.

The local federations

Although the local federations were eventually recognised as vital links in the party's organisation, their formal powers of suggestion and influence were still deliberately limited. They were still marginalised within the party as a whole. Many of the comments in local Gaullist journals, as the final section of this chapter will show, were an attempt to respond to this marginalisation by emphasising what particular localities and individual local party members had to contribute to Gaullism. The party leadership was keen to use local branches to reinforce the party's national message and to integrate them into a coherent national mission. Gaullists at the local level did not always accept this, and many intervened in their local bulletins on their own terms. Others found that Gaullism could be easily adapted to suit their own local crusades. Whether they were adapting the rhetoric defined by national party leaders, such as Baumel, or rebelling against it, however, one thing was certain; there were Gaullists

operating in a local arena who wished to make a contribution to Gaullism.

They achieved this in spite of a hierarchical party structure which sought to keep the activities of the local federations under tight control. Between October 1958 and May 1963 the UNR statutes stated that each party in each *département* should elect a committee for that *département*, which would then choose its secretary general and treasurer. These arrangements only became definitive when ratified by the national central committee⁴⁹. Such a procedure was evidently designed to minimise the risk of the election of representatives unacceptable to the national leadership. In reality, many federations took internal democracy quite seriously and elected their secretary directly at the local *assises*⁵⁰. In the Ain in February 1961, the election of the new departmental committee was reported to have taken place “dans une atmosphère cordiale et de grande unanimité”⁵¹. In the Gard, after the report of the outgoing secretary general, another party official asked the assembled members to acclaim the man unanimously, thus demonstrating their desire to see him remain at the head of the federation - this was duly performed with great enthusiasm⁵². The following year, on the day of one of the monthly general meetings for the constituency of Nîmes, the same departmental

⁴⁹ UNR statutes, articles 8 and 12, Box CD, Institut Charles de Gaulle, Paris.

⁵⁰ Some of the *départements* who did this were: the Ain, at its *assises* of February 1961; the Aveyron (March 1961 and February 1962); the Charente-Maritime (March 1961); the Côtes-du-Nord (March 1961); the Eure-et-Loir (March 1961); the Gard (March 1961); the Isère (March 1961); the Lot (February 1961); the Marne (March 1961); the Hautes-Pyrénées (March 1961); the Puy-de-Dôme (February 1961); the Bas-Rhin (February 1961 and March 1962); the Rhône (October 1960); the Haute-Saône (February 1961); the Côte d'Or (December 1960); the Indre-et-Loir (May 1960). Source: accounts of these meetings in *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*.

⁵¹ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 10-19 March 1961.

⁵² *ibid.*, 17-23 March 1961.

secretary general, who was unable to attend for health reasons, decided to record his speeches on an audio cassette, so that they could be broadcast to those present. This initiative was met with much applause and appreciation of the secretary's commitment to being present at the meeting⁵³. In the Lot-et-Garonne, in July 1960, the secretary for the *département* made an emotional speech explaining that he could not continue in his post for health reasons. He added that he felt obliged to confer the direction of the local party to another "compagnon", whom he named, convinced that all members would approve his election as if it were his own re-election⁵⁴. Such evidence indicates that, however the local representative was selected, party members did at least participate in the process in some areas.

In some localities, the influence of the national party administration was more strongly felt. In the Moselle in March 1961, new local leaders had to be chosen after the federation underwent an internal crisis involving the resignation of many *Algérie Française* sympathisers. Many federations suffered similar problems throughout 1961. The list of members authorised to vote in the election was drawn up by the national secretary general Jacques Richard. They were to accept or reject, by a secret ballot presided over by Maurice Bayrou (a member of the national party's central committee and *commission politique*), a list established by the (purged) members of the old *comité départemental* and the national councillors and deputies for the locality. This list was approved almost unanimously⁵⁵. The

⁵³ *ibid.*, 1 February 1962.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 23-29 July 1960.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 17-23 March 1961.

intervention of the national secretary general illustrates the degree of control which the party leadership could exert. During the Algerian years, it wished to avoid all possibility of divisions.

Inevitably there were variations between localities. The largest federations, such as that of the Nord, tended to focus more power in the hands of the departmental secretary general than was required by the statutes; in this locality he was given the right to nominate all local party officials and could dissolve the executive committee. To compensate, ordinary members were given the opportunity to elect directly a president for the *département*, a right which had not been mentioned in the statutes. This situation can perhaps be best explained by the difficulties the federation had to deal with when Léon Delbecque left the party. The Nord was regarded as his personal fiefdom and it was difficult for many to accept that there could be a Gaullist party at all if he were not involved; they promptly resigned. Other localities to elect a president were the Hérault, where André Valabrègue was chosen, the Ain, the Aveyron, the Hautes-Pyrénées, the Bas-Rhin and the Rhône⁵⁶. Such evidence further confirms the volatility of the Gaullist party during the early years of the Fifth Republic and illustrates why the national party leadership was nervous about allowing local federations too much freedom.

Dissatisfaction with the performance of the local federations led the recently-appointed national secretary general, Jacques Baumel, to introduce a modification of the party's statutes at the meeting of the UNR-UDT national council held at Asnières in May

⁵⁶ "Comment fonctionne une grande fédération: l'exemple du Nord", *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, September 1962.

1963. The new statutes stated that local officials were to be chosen by the movement's national secretary general, with the approval of the central committee. The appointee was then to nominate all other local representatives, as was already the case in the Nord⁵⁷. Furthermore, a *comité départemental* elected by local members was to choose a president and a bureau to represent the local party⁵⁸. These reforms were clearly designed to reinforce the control of the national party over its local branches and were characterised by a rigid separation of authority: the executive (the local representative) emanating from the top (the central committee), the council (the bureau for the *département* with its president) emanating from the bottom (the members). The secretary general did not hold absolute power; he would inevitably be obliged to take account of local preferences when nominating other officials. Yet Baumel's reforms did represent an attempt to control the activities of the federations and served as a further illustration of the party's fear of divisions during this decade. They were aware that there were many Gaullists at the local level who were eager to make a potentially unwelcome contribution to Gaullist thinking.

Although the secretary general's right to nominate local officials did enable Baumel to weed out ineffective agents and replace them with potentially more active Gaullists, thus introducing a measure of change to local federations, evidence about the organisation of Gaullist activity in the localities does not suggest that those at the highest level of the party were in favour of a significant degree of influence for those lower down. Baumel

⁵⁷ See *La Nation*, 20 May 1963.

⁵⁸ Article 12 of the statutes after the conseil national d'Asnières, 18-19 May 1963, Box CD, Institut Charles de Gaulle, Paris.

did want active local federations, but only within the terms he had already laid down in his frequent speeches. Their activities were required to reproduce the framework of the national party.

Baumel's attitude was similar to that of Chalandon - he wanted to see Gaullists holding meetings with local professionals. In 1966 he created the *Comités d'action régionale pour la Ve République* to bring dynamic, forward-thinking people together at the local level - exactly the approach that Chalandon had adopted at national level in the early years of the Gaullist party's existence⁵⁹. One circular of 29 April 1964 issued clear instructions:

“... Faites des conférences du XX^e siècle avec des orateurs de Paris, demandez des comptes rendus de mandats à vos élus, organisez des colloques et la presse, dans une certaine mesure, pourra parler de nous...”.

Similar circulars of 6 and 20 December had called on local officials to organise meetings with non-party experts to deal with specific subjects⁶⁰. At the Nice *assises* of November 1963, non-Gaullists had been invited to participate in a series of discussions on “the France of 1980”⁶¹. He was eager for local officials to associate young professionals with Gaullism, thus opening the party to the most “dynamic” elements of society and enabling the movement to attract new younger members, even if they had not been involved in Gaullism in previous years⁶². The irate tone of one circular of 1964 suggests that local officials did not share his enthusiasm: it

⁵⁹ *La Nation*, 7 March 1966.

⁶⁰ *La Nation*, 21 December 1963.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, 25 November 1963.

⁶² *ibid.*, 3 January 1964.

pointed out that much organisational work still remained, and that all local officials, including secretary generals of local federations, who were not aware of this work or who were not sufficiently motivated to carry it out, would be immediately removed from their posts⁶³.

Responsibility for the enforcement of such threats lay with the *chargés de mission*, who came to dominate contacts between Paris and the provinces. They were answerable only to the national secretary general. If local federations failed to provide adequate monthly accounts, they forfeited their allowance for that month. All their propaganda and campaign money came from the national centre, which maintained tight control of candidates and their bargaining between rounds. Circulars of 6 and 8 January 1959 signed by Roger Frey demanded that local federations provide detailed accounts of the execution of the central committee's instructions concerning the campaign for the March municipal elections⁶⁴. One such circular dated 6 March and signed by Frey announced that bargaining with other parties should only be undertaken with the agreement of national party headquarters⁶⁵. Centralisation was thus extreme: the organisation of local federations was dictated in detail⁶⁶, while special circulars explained the correct procedure in such matters as "how to prepare a forum"⁶⁷. The organisation of the movement was never debated. Local secretaries had a twice-yearly meeting in Paris, but

⁶³ *ibid.*, 25 April 1964.

⁶⁴ Box D, Institut Charles de Gaulle, Paris.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁶ UNR-UDT, *Note d'orientation*, no. 3, model of a local federation, Central office, 1963, pp. 12, Box CD, Institut Charles de Gaulle, Paris.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

these consisted of set-piece speeches by ministers and only took place when there was already a national council meeting or *assises*, or when a new secretary general was chosen. One meeting, for example, was arranged for 19 and 20 January 1963, when Baumel was officially sworn in. Those present listened to speeches by Baumel, four ministers, the president of the National Assembly, the *rapporteur* for the budget, the president of the UNR-UDT parliamentary group, the secretary general of the national council and the secretary general of the *assises*⁶⁸. Such occasions were considered by the national leadership as opportunities to re-assert the national priorities of the Gaullist party which they had already outlined. They were determined to maintain control of the federations. This should not, however, be regarded solely as an autocratic central authority denying freedom to its local representatives, but as part of the Gaullist party's attempt to participate in the renovation of French republican political culture. Administrators such as Baumel wanted to create a new mass-membership party which took its inspiration from Paris and in which deputies would no longer have a privileged role. It does not seem, however, that he succeeded in this ambition. Local Gaullists turned to the pages of their local bulletins to express their views on Gaullism and Gaullist policies, in a move which drew them to speak up on behalf of local interests. The final section of this chapter will deal with these bulletins.

⁶⁸ *La Nation*, 21 January 1963.

Local elections

During the first half of the decade, then, the Gaullist party's arrangements for organising its activities in each locality sought to limit the involvement of grassroots Gaullists. The local federations were deliberately marginalised. However, the party's failure to capture many town halls in the municipal elections of 1965 led to a substantial rethink by the party leadership. After 1965, which brought the additional shock of de Gaulle's reluctant participation in a hard-fought presidential campaign against François Mitterrand, Gaullist leaders became more aware of the need for better local organisation if they were to survive as a political force beyond the end of the General's time in office. The importance of strong local bases for the ultimate survival of the party was gradually accepted. The risk of local federations becoming focal points for divisions within the party was eventually outweighed by the need for electoral survival.

Gaullist performance in local elections was disappointing in the 1960s. In the municipal elections of March 1959, for example, the UNR did not match its unexpected success in the parliamentary elections of November 1958. This was despite having introduced an electoral reform for the municipal elections designed to maximise their chances. They replaced proportional representation in the towns (except in major cities with more than 120,000 inhabitants) with the majority system already used in the villages. Votes were cast for a party list, though names could be deleted or written in. If one list had a clear majority it won, taking all the seats; if not, a second ballot was held a week later at which the list with most votes won. Lists could be altered between the

rounds, and coalitions with a chance of victory were built up by hasty and frantic bargaining.

The Gaullists hoped that this change would polarise opinion between themselves and the Communists, thus enabling them to force their way into government at the local level as they had at the national level. They also expected to benefit from the reaction against the Communists and the old Fourth Republican parties which had characterised the vote of the previous November. This did not happen. Although the UNR gained some 5,000 councillors, it still had less than the parties of the left, the MRP, the Independents (who had the largest total number of elected candidates with 170,000) and “apolitical” administrators (who doubled in number). Many a mayor beat off the Gaullist challenger who had captured his parliamentary seat six months before. In Lyon, for example, the incumbent apolitical mayor M. Pradel easily defeated Jacques Soustelle, who had hoped to replace him. The UNR also failed to make any progress in cities such as Lille, Saint-Etienne and Marseille⁶⁹. Heartened by this, opposition commentators immediately predicted that the Gaullist party was finished⁷⁰. Discord was apparent among the Gaullists; Albin Chalandon blamed the party's difficulties on the government's economic policy⁷¹, as did the UNR journal *Le courrier politique*⁷², while a party communiqué explained Communist gains as the consequence of the government's failure to take account of

⁶⁹ *L'Année politique*, 1959, pp. 31-3.

⁷⁰ See for example “Une grande victoire de notre Parti et des forces républicaines”, *Cahiers du Communisme*, Vol. 35 No. 3, Paris 1959 (March), p. 154.

⁷¹ *Le Monde*, 10 March 1959.

⁷² *Courrier politique*, 16 March 1959.

public opinion⁷³. This illustrated the divisions within the Gaullist movement. Minister of the Interior Jean Berthoin responded to the success of the Fourth Republican parties by claiming that the municipal elections were primarily an election of administrators rather than of politicians and thus should not be interpreted “politically”⁷⁴. De Gaulle echoed this reaction when he proclaimed that “l'enjeu était nullement le succès ou la défaite d'un grand intérêt national”⁷⁵. This served as confirmation for many observers that Gaullism had no relevance to local politics and would never break into local government.

Before the 1965 municipal elections, the government changed the voting system once more in the 159 large towns with more than 30,000 inhabitants. Lists could still be withdrawn, and had to be if they polled under 10 per cent of the vote, but they could no longer be altered in any way at the second ballot. All negotiations therefore had to take place before the nominations closed. The reform suggested that on this occasion the Gaullist party was determined to make progress at the local level⁷⁶. De Gaulle urged ministers to stand. Generals, admirals and former prefects were mobilised to represent the cause in towns where they were thought to be influential. The Minister of the Interior, Roger Frey, spoke of the elections as an opportunity for the Gaullists to broaden their appeal and organise a nationwide majority⁷⁷. The Industry Minister, Maurice-Bokanowski, stressed

⁷³ *ibid.*, 20 March 1959.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 10 March 1959.

⁷⁵ Press conference of 25 March 1958 - see A. Passeron, *De Gaulle parle (1958-1962)*, Paris 1962, p. 60.

⁷⁶ F. Goguel, “La signification de la consultation”, *Revue française de science politique*, Vol. 15 No. 5 (October 1965), p. 912.

⁷⁷ *Le Monde*, 2 March 1965.

that the government did not consider the contest to be a “*péripétie édilitaire*” - the results would be an encouraging gift to General de Gaulle and would strengthen his resolve to contest the presidential election in November⁷⁸. Two days before the poll, the Prime Minister, Georges Pompidou, who had himself become a candidate in Cajarc in the Lot, appeared on television to urge the voters to follow the spirit of the Fifth Republic by eliminating the *régime des partis* from every level of national life⁷⁹. Such an intervention was forcefully attacked by the other parties, who had been denied virtually all opportunities to use the medium⁸⁰. Evidently the Gaullist strategy for success in the local elections was to give them national significance, making their outcome a national priority rather than arguing that they were little more than provincial squabbles. The objective of breaking the grip of the parties on the *mairies* did introduce a degree of urgency to the poll.

Appropriately, party leaders used the same language locally that they were accustomed to using nationally. In Saint-Etienne, the list headed by Lucien Neuwirth, deputy for the constituency, included many who were not elected politicians, but local professionals. This was very much in keeping with the approach articulated nationally by Jacques Baumel, who had argued that modern politics was a matter of efficient administration rather than of ideological posturing⁸¹. Neuwirth's election propaganda closely mirrored that produced by national party administrators: pointing out that his list was one of “technicians”, he claimed that

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, 2 March 1965.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, 11 March 1965.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, 12 March 1965.

⁸¹ See Chapter Three.

its aim was to “régler des problèmes techniques avec l'aide des pouvoirs publics”⁸². In addition, they did not plan to oppose the government systematically, but nor did they intend to support it unquestioningly. This was a view frequently expressed by Gaullist deputies with regard to the role of the Gaullist party. Similarly, in Grenoble, the Gaullist list led by Dr. Michallon contained ten candidates who were not affiliated to any political party, including one engineer employed by *Electricité de France* and one civil engineer. These contests reflected the Gaullists' desire to make the 1965 municipal elections subject to the same pressures as the legislative elections of 1958 and 1962, in which they had been so successful, and keep voters' minds focused on the issues which would dominate the coming presidential contest.

Again they did not succeed. In the 159 large towns no party, except the Communists, captured or was ousted from more than four town halls, and only seventeen outgoing mayors were rejected. Electoral statistics show that in the large towns, 70 per cent of voters chose stability while 80 per cent did so elsewhere⁸³. It was difficult ground for the Gaullists to fight on; few of them had records of long-standing involvement in local politics, and they could not count on the appeal of nationalism or the prestige of the General to pull them through. Yet the reason for the Gaullists' limited gains in local elections in this period can perhaps be better explained by the fact that many French towns were in general more likely to be run by well-established teams of administrators with past histories of achievement at the local level. Instead of a bitter conflict about the content of a joint programme -

⁸² *Le Monde*, 3 March 1965.

⁸³ Williams, *French politicians*, p. 180.

all the harder to agree on because it affirmed principles which were unlikely to be realised - there was a common record of civic achievement to defend⁸⁴. Instead of a sordid squabble about the choice of candidates, there was a recognised leader, the existing mayor, often with a team used to working together. In Marseilles, for example, the mayor was the well-known Socialist figure Defferre, once touted as a possible presidential candidate, who could unite the Left against de Gaulle. Despite a strong challenge from the Gaullist and Communists, he maintained his grip on the *mairie* with the backing of his traditional allies the conservatives⁸⁵.

Once it had been defeated, Gaullism naturally changed its tune and minimised the importance of the contest. The President repeated his view of 1959 that the election had no bearing on the nation's destiny⁸⁶. *La Nation* professed to regard the outcome as "une parenthèse"⁸⁷. These reverses also confirmed that the Gaullist party was in need of reform. The attempt to transform local elections into major events of national political life had proved to be mistaken. In future, greater emphasis would be laid upon developing local Gaullist activity, rather than trying to impose national priorities upon it. Stronger bases for capturing town halls were essential. At the Lille *assises* of November 1967, the party machine was fundamentally restructured. The constituency - the arena closest to the activists and the contact point with the electorate - replaced the traditional local federation as the basic organisational unit. This was an effective admission that the

⁸⁴ Williams, *French politicians*, p. 178.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 184.

⁸⁶ *Le Monde*, 26 March 1965.

⁸⁷ *La Nation*, 25 March 1965.

deputy would continue to play an important role in Gaullism at the local level. Parallel to this, the Lille congress had made local councils compulsory in all parts of France. After October 1968, the UDR made a point of organising local study days, which not only publicised localisation but stressed the vitality of the Gaullist movement at the local level⁸⁸. This was part of a larger campaign for “participation” in all areas of life, whereby participation in industry, in education and in local matters were all closely linked to participation in the Gaullist party. A folder published by the UDR in February 1969 used a photograph of the Gaullist demonstration of 30 May 1968 to illustrate how members could participate in the party's quest to “build the France of tomorrow”⁸⁹.

A further aspect of the strengthening of the Gaullist party was the launch of a new internal monthly bulletin called *Démocrates* and of a nationwide membership drive in April 1968⁹⁰. Although the campaign was disrupted by the events of May 1968, these events resulted in a huge increase in applications for membership of the Gaullist party. In August 1968, the department dealing with membership announced that 500 applications were arriving daily, and in March 1969 the party claimed that 180,000 membership cards had been sent out to local federations⁹¹. Taking into account the cards printed but not used and the exaggerations that are usual in this kind of estimate, one could still say that by

⁸⁸ Some of these meetings were held at Marseilles in October 1968 (*La Nation*, 28 October 1968), in Charleville-Mézières in November 1968 (*La Nation*, 17 November 1968), Bordeaux in December 1968 (*La Nation*, 20 December 1968) and at Tours in February 1969 (*La Nation*, 8 February 1969).

⁸⁹ Box CD, Institut Charles de Gaulle, Paris.

⁹⁰ *Démocrates*, April 1968.

⁹¹ *Démocrates*, September-October 1968 and April 1969.

the end of the decade the UDR had managed to double its membership since 1962⁹². By the end of the decade, the Gaullist party had begun to compensate for its earlier attitude towards its internal organisation. It was better prepared to confront the next round of municipal elections, due in 1971.

As noted, it was one of the unintentional ironies of Gaullism that a movement which in the early days of the 1960s professed to dislike the very notion of political parties ended up creating a well-structured political machine, primarily designed to win elections. The reforms undertaken at the end of the 1960s were in many ways precursors to those brought in by Jacques Chirac in the 1970s when he succeeded in engineering a major change in the Gaullist party. The UDR, which appeared to have lost most of its impetus since the death of President Pompidou in 1974, was turned into the *Rassemblement pour la République* in December 1976 and Chirac was chosen as its leader. The new party was designed to be a popular, mass movement with the specific aim of supporting its leader's bid for the presidency. It launched a huge membership drive and by January 1979 claimed to have 750,000 members – a considerable improvement on the 285,000 claimed by the UDR in mid-1976. It also had active federations in all 96 *départements* and 200 factory groups⁹³. Although these figures should perhaps be treated with scepticism they are indicative of the new lease of life which Chirac initially gave to the Gaullist movement.

⁹² Roger Dusseaulx, secretary general of the UNR at the time, said at the departmental *assises* of the Loiret that the UNR had 75,000 members (*Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 1 March 1962).

⁹³ Wright, *Government and Politics*, p. 194.

Although Chirac's transformation of the Gaullist movement made it decisively different in style to its former incarnations, perhaps it could be said that the groundwork for this development was carried by the Gaullist party leadership at the end of the 1960s. The pioneering reforms of men such as Poujade and Charbonnel meant that the Gaullist movement was sufficiently well organised to survive the radical change in political circumstances brought about in the 1970s by the election of Giscard as President and the consequent reduction in importance of the Gaullist party.

All this came rather too late for those Gaullists who had wanted to make a contribution to Gaullist campaigns before then. Their ideas, unwelcome to national party administrators who wished to maintain tight control over the local federations, had to be expressed in local newsletters. As we shall see, the pages of these journals offered ideas which did seem compatible with the national message of modernisation put across by the party leadership. Those who contributed to them wished to invent the Gaullist party as a practical reforming movement with a clear attitude to the less "heroic" problems of politics. Gaullism's failure to capitalise on this electorally during the 1960s could be explained by the rigid organisation of the party before 1967 and to the distinctive nature of French local affairs at the time, not the nature of Gaullism. The next section will argue that although internally the Gaullist party did not encourage local democracy and never gave formal importance to the role of local federations, journals produced by local Gaullist politicians do give a valuable indication of how Gaullism could adapt itself to the demands of local affairs. Much evidence indicates that there were Gaullists

who felt that they had a valuable contribution to make to the way in which Gaullism should be defined, and since they were marginalised by the way in which the party was organised, they turned to the pages of their local newsletter to express their opinions.

LOCAL GAULLIST JOURNALS

National issues

Information about the activities of Gaullist local federations is difficult to obtain. Reports in the national Gaullist press tended to focus only upon those aspects of local activities which could be related to national issues. In this way such publications sought to reiterate familiar themes of the rhetoric of the national party. One meeting held by the federation of the Seine, for example, was reported as claiming that the opposition parties were determined to return to the regime of the Fourth Republic⁹⁴. It was evident that the national party journal wished to give the impression of a nationally integrated party, united in harmonious pursuit of the same political goals. This was part of the process of affirming the party's identity on the national political stage. One section of *Le courrier de la nouvelle République* entitled "la vie du mouvement" did give the activities of local federations a high profile, but again these activities were considered noteworthy only insofar as they rehearsed the priorities of national party propaganda⁹⁵. Local meetings would also feature in *Le courrier* when they were

⁹⁴ Meeting held on 28 April 1960 (*Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 6-13 May 1960).

⁹⁵ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 6-13 May 1960 and most weeks thereafter.

addressed by senior government figures⁹⁶. Frequently the centre pages of the journal would be devoted to UNR activity in particular localities, which suggested that the role of local branches of the party was taken quite seriously. “Dans toute la France, l'UNR manifeste sa vitalité”, claimed one article⁹⁷. However, local meetings were often attended by government ministers and the reports describing them were dominated by a national political perspective⁹⁸. In 1967, all local *assises* were held on the same day, thus denying them the opportunity to affirm an individual identity, and all were attended by a government figure, effectively reminding them who was in charge⁹⁹.

There could be no clearer illustration of the party leadership's desire to maintain its authority over the local federations. Not all Gaullists were willing to accept this authority. The presence of government figures at local *assises*, as well as the party bulletin's determination to relate local activities to national campaigns, showed the fear of division which occupied Gaullist leaders during the 1960s. This was inevitable during the early years of the Fifth Republic, when the Algerian conflict dominated both national and local affairs. The need to maintain party unity during this period left its mark on the rest of the decade. The conflicts over Algeria between rival factions of the national leadership were reproduced in the local federations. This was particularly noticeable in the Nord, where the party managed to

⁹⁶ Report of Edmond Michelet addressing the Haute-Savoie UNR local *assises*, *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 17-23 February 1961.

⁹⁷ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 1 November 1961.

⁹⁸ See for example the report of the *assises* of the federation of the Seine-et-Oise at Courbevoie (*Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 24 February-2 March 1961).

⁹⁹ *La Nation*, 31 October 1967.

resist attempts to break away from the national UNR, defeating the *Algérie Française* faction at a special meeting by 27 votes to 19. The UNR in the Rhône experienced the same problem¹⁰⁰. Given the turbulence existing at this time, it was not surprising that party leaders were wary of allowing the local federations too much freedom.

The bitterness left by the Algerian conflict was evident. Letters were published in *Le courrier de la nouvelle République* condemning those who aimed to use de Gaulle for their own political ends. Jean Violette, secretary general of the federation of the Isère, wrote to criticise violently those who had attempted to force their local group to secede from the national party. Their expulsion was thoroughly deserved: “Nous ne pouvions... accepter parmi nous des hommes dont la fidélité est à éclipse et qui abandonnent de Gaulle dans le combat qu'il mène”¹⁰¹. A similar argument was also used by Pierre Deiber, secretary general of the federation of Meurthe-et-Moselle. He compared the *Algérie Française* faction to Judas, as they had claimed to be firmly behind de Gaulle in 1958 and had then proceeded to “betray” him. This illustrated the deep confidence in de Gaulle’s abilities which motivated many Gaullists¹⁰², as did the frequent messages of thanks and congratulations to the General for all that he had done, such as those sent by the federations of the Seine and of the Charente-Maritime¹⁰³. Clearly, *Le courrier de la nouvelle République* attempted to present the early years of the Fifth Republic as a

¹⁰⁰ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 21-27 October 1960.

¹⁰¹ “La tribune du militant”, *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 21-27 October 1960.

¹⁰² *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 11-17 November 1960.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, July 1962.

triumph for the government over non-Gaullists who had infiltrated the party in order to impose their own views on it. In reality, the episode illustrated the complexity of Gaullism and the party leadership's determination to limit the divisive effects of that complexity.

A similar determination was evident in the pages of *La Nation*. Although the journal claimed to speak for the UNR, which it described as “le 'gros bataillon' du gaullisme militant” in its first issue¹⁰⁴, it provided little information about party life beyond the activities of the national leadership. The only time it paid attention to the local federations was when they were visited by a national party leader such as Baumel, to be reminded of the national party's priorities. The UNR federation of Finistère, for example, was lectured by Baumel on the dynamism of France today in March 1963. In July 1964, the federation of the Var was told of the Gaullist party's openness to other political forces, while later in the year the federation of the Upper Rhine was instructed that the Gaullist party had to modernise¹⁰⁵. In this way the party leadership sought to bind the local representatives of Gaullism to the national project which they had defined.

In many local Gaullist party newsletters, deputies participated in this project by faithfully reflecting the priorities of national propaganda. One of the most popular themes of national party rhetoric to find its way into the pages of local journals during the 1960s was that which claimed that opposition politicians, if elected, would re-introduce the old regime - an argument that was frequently repeated. In *Le courrier de Clichy-*

¹⁰⁴ *La Nation*, 1 March 1962.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, 30 April 1963, 13 July 1964 and 26 January 1965.

Levallois, for example, the Gaullist deputy for the area, Roland Carter, wrote of the failings of the Fourth Republican parties, pointing out that they were still as divided as ever and were still displaying the same weaknesses which had ultimately destroyed them, almost taking France with them in the crisis of 1958¹⁰⁶. Deputy René Lacombe made similar points in *La voix de l'Anjou*, emphasising that the typical Fourth Republican deputy was more interested in the internal affairs of his particular party than the decisions which affected the destiny of the nation¹⁰⁷. The abbé Laudrin commented disparagingly on the obstructiveness of the old political classes in *Le nouveau Morbihan*, claiming that their interpretation of the role of the deputy did not involve positive contributions to drafting policy but a desire to “jeter des pelures d'orange sur le parcours des membres du Gouvernement”¹⁰⁸. One writer in the local Gaullist journal for Dijon recalled Vincent Auriol's statement that “Quand il n'y a plus de crises ministérielles, il n'y a plus de liberté” to ridicule the attachment felt by non-Gaullist French politicians to parliamentary games¹⁰⁹. In *L'espoir de Montmartre*, Jean Bernasconi, deputy for the 18th arrondissement in Paris, criticised the inability of ministers during the 1950s to take any kind of decisive action - they were more interested in protesting against injustice and making promises, which cost them nothing, and expected others to act¹¹⁰. Gabriel Kaspereit, deputy for the 9th arrondissement, used the newsletter

¹⁰⁶ *Le courrier de Clichy-Levallois*, May 1966.

¹⁰⁷ *La Voix de l'Anjou*, 14 November 1958. De Gaulle's reforms would change all this, he argued.

¹⁰⁸ L'abbé Laudrin in *Le nouveau Morbihan*, 4 January 1961.

¹⁰⁹ Bernard Fontaine in *Le courrier de la Côte d'Or*, January 1960.

¹¹⁰ *L'espoir de Montmartre*, March 1962.

he edited to highlight the lack of action taken to improve the Parisian environment in the twentieth century before the Fifth Republic had introduced a new era of efficiency¹¹¹. *La voix de Bigorre* argued that de Gaulle was all that stood between the Fifth Republic and the *régime des partis*¹¹², the local deputy Dr. Thillard adding in another issue that “Le passé ne reviendra pas”¹¹³. François Grussenmeyer followed the lead of his colleagues in his local bulletin¹¹⁴. Raymond Dronne complained in the party journal for the Sarthe of the opposition parties' tendency to use any issue available to try needlessly to obstruct the government's work¹¹⁵. The bulletin of the Gaullist federation of Savoy made a similar point when it contrasted the relative achievements of the Fourth and Fifth Republics in the domain of local economic development. While the Fourth talked and discussed change, the Fifth took action¹¹⁶.

National affairs were always present in the pages of the local Gaullist press. Apart from defending the government's record in general terms, many articles concentrated on aspects of national policy, such as Algeria¹¹⁷, particularly between 1958 and 1962, foreign affairs¹¹⁸, the institutions of the new Republic¹¹⁹, Europe¹²⁰,

¹¹¹ 9^e *Dernière*, February 1965.

¹¹² *La voix de Bigorre*, May 1961.

¹¹³ *ibid.*, November-December 1964.

¹¹⁴ *Tour d'Horizon*, July-August 1965.

¹¹⁵ *L'éveil sarthois*, November 1960.

¹¹⁶ *L'Union Savoyarde pour la nouvelle République*, June 1965. See also the issue for November-December 1958, article vilifying the Fourth Republic entitled “La Crépuscule des Dieux”

¹¹⁷ *Le courrier de Clichy-Levallois*, March 1962, article by Roland Carter; *Le courrier de la Côte d'Or*, February 1960, text of speech by Colonel Darcy; *Le courrier du Rhin*, 4 January 1961, text of speech by Edmond Borocco.

¹¹⁸ *Le courrier de Clichy-Levallois*, April-May 1962, November 1964, articles by Roland Carter; 9^{ème} *Dernière*, April 1966, article by Gabriel Kaspereit on NATO; *Tour d'Horizon*, January 1964, article by Alfred Westphal on the strike force, and July-August 1967, article by François

education¹²¹, *l'aménagement du territoire*¹²², housing¹²³ and social and economic policy¹²⁴. Equally, much space was devoted to praising General de Gaulle, usually when he appeared on television¹²⁵, gave a press conference¹²⁶ and travelled abroad or in France¹²⁷. On occasion, bulletins might simply publish articles commenting approvingly on all he had achieved¹²⁸. Many local journals, tellingly, only appeared at election time, such as *La voix de l'Anjou*, or when there was a referendum to be won, such as *Le nouveau Morbihan* and *Le courrier du Rhin*¹²⁹. De Gaulle's name and

Grussenmeyer on Quebec; *L'éveil sarthois*, September 1960, article by Raymond Dronne; *Le courrier de Paris*, July 1963, article by Philippe Rossillon.

¹¹⁹ *L'espoir de Montreuil*, 1 May 1959, article by Jean-Louis Profichet; *La voix de l'Anjou*, 14 November 1958, article by René Lacombe; *Le courrier de la Côte d'Or*, January 1960, article by Bernard Fontaine; February 1961, article by Robert Poujade.

¹²⁰ *L'espoir de Montmartre*, March 1962, December 1962-January 1963, June-July 1964; *Tour d'Horizon*, June 1962, editorial; June 1963, article by François Grussenmeyer; *L'éveil Sarthois*, February-March 1963; *Le courrier de Paris*, June 1963; *L'union savoyarde pour la nouvelle République*, July-August 1965, article entitled "Que s'est-il réellement passé à Bruxelles?"

¹²¹ *gème Dernière*, September-October 1968, article by Gabriel Kaspereit; *Le courrier de Paris*, June 1963; *Le courrier de Clichy-Levallois*, December 1964.

¹²² *La voix de Bigorre*, February 1968, article entitled "L'aménagement du territoire: la grande affaire de la France".

¹²³ *Le courrier de Paris*, July 1963, article by Philippe Rossillon; *Le courrier de Clichy-Levallois*, April-May 1964; *Le courrier de la Côte d'Or*, September 1964, article by Dr Berger, "Loger les personnes âgées"; *L'espoir de Montmartre*, December 1961, article entitled "En finir avec le scandale des mal-logés".

¹²⁴ *Le courrier de Paris*, July 1963, article by Philippe Rossillon; *L'éveil sarthois*, June 1962, article by Maurice Lemaire; *L'union savoyarde pour la nouvelle République*, June 1965, article on the CODERs, and July-August 1965, article on the Family.

¹²⁵ *Le courrier de Clichy-Levallois*, April-May 1964; *La voix de Bigorre*, January 1969; *L'éveil sarthois*, December 1960; *L'union savoyarde pour la nouvelle République*, February 1967.

¹²⁶ *Tour d'Horizon*, March 1963; *L'éveil sarthois*, April 1961.

¹²⁷ *Le courrier de Clichy-Levallois*, October 1964, described de Gaulle's trip to Latin America; *Le nouveau Morbihan*, 4 January 1961, carried a large photograph of de Gaulle acclaimed by local crowds with the caption "le 'oui' du Morbihan au général de Gaulle"

¹²⁸ *Le courrier de Clichy-Levallois*, November 1964; *Le courrier de la Côte d'Or*, February 1960, article entitled "De Gaulle a bien mérité de la Patrie"; *La voix de Bigorre*, May 1961; *Tour d'Horizon*, June 1962; *L'union savoyarde pour la nouvelle République*, February 1967.

¹²⁹ In fact only one issue of each of these two titles was ever published, both in January 1961. As the Gaullist newsletter for Dijon put it, "Les périodiques locaux comme le nôtre ont souvent une vie très brève, et leur premier numéro a souvent la destinée de ces malheureux qu'évoque La Fontaine: 'Le premier instant qui les voit ouvrir leurs yeux à la lumière est celui qui vient quelquefois fermer pour toujours leur paupière'" (*Le courrier de la Côte-d'Or*, January 1961).

photograph were used by election candidates as slogans¹³⁰. In addition, speeches by important party figures were frequently cited approvingly¹³¹.

This approach was designed to bind local Gaullist consciousness to what went on in Paris. Often, local party newsletters simply reprinted articles from the national journal, *La Nation*¹³². In this way, the national perspective of Gaullism was ever-present. This was no doubt because the newsletters were usually controlled by the local deputy, who would be careful about what was published. Yet there was more to the journals than this. Closer examination reveals how they sought to create a role for themselves within the party and how they articulated their own message. Deputies and other local officials did communicate the arguments which the party leadership required them to. But at the same time they used their position as the most prominent

¹³⁰ "Voter Millot c'est voter de Gaulle." *La voix de l'Anjou*, 19 May 1960 (bye-election campaign); 30 May 1961, a personal letter from de Gaulle to Jean Narquin, a candidate in the *élections cantonales*, was printed to demonstrate his impeccable Gaullist credentials; 23 October 1962, de Gaulle's photograph was printed next to that of the parliamentary candidate René Lacombe.

¹³¹ *Le courrier de Clichy-Levallois*, November 1964, article by Minister of Culture André Malraux; *Le courrier de la Côte d'Or*, June-July 1960, article by Jacques Baumel, secretary general of the UNR-UDT, March-April 1961, article by Roger Frey, January 1962, article by Roger Dusseaux, president of the UNR-UDT parliamentary group, September 1964, article by Jacques Chaban-Delmas, president of the National Assembly, and December 1967, text of the speech made by Robert Poujade, newly-appointed secretary general of the UDR, at the Lille *assises*; *L'espoir de Montmartre*, November 1962, letter from Malraux to local deputy Bernasconi; *La voix de Bigorre*, October 1963, extracts from speeches made by ex-Premier Debré and Prime Minister Pompidou at the Nice *assises*; *Le courrier de Paris*, March 1964, interview with Minister of Labour Gilbert Grandval; *Tour d'Horizon*, January-February 1969, text of television interview with Prime Minister Couve de Murville.

¹³² Such as an article entitled "Le 'mouvement' du mouvement", about the UNR-UDT, written by Jacques Baumel and originally published in *Notre République*, the left-wing Gaullist journal; it reappeared in *La voix de Bigorre*, October 1963. The same journal often reprinted articles from the national Gaullist daily *La Nation*: editorials by Jacques de Montalais (October 1963), Georges Becker (April 1965), Louis Vallon (May-June 1965), Frédéric Grendel (January 1966) and Georges Broussine (April-May 1966). All of these contributed regularly to the national Gaullist press. *L'éveil sarthois* also reproduced articles from *La Nation* and *Notre République*: there was one printed in the issue for April 1963 (by Maurice Lemaire), three in July-August 1963, three in May 1964, and seven (of ten published in total) in May 1966.

representatives of the Gaullist movement in a particular area to criticise Gaullist governments and campaign on behalf of local concerns. In so doing, these Gaullists revealed their belief that there was no incompatibility between the national mission of Gaullism and the defence of local interests. This illustrated the flexibility of the Gaullist movement, a flexibility which would enable it to survive after the departure from office of General de Gaulle. The national achievements of the President remained an important feature of the Gaullist message. But in order to survive politically, Gaullism had to show how it could materially benefit local communities. The way in which it did this constitutes a fascinating case study in the adaptation of political beliefs to particular local circumstances and shows the complexity and dynamism of Gaullism during the 1960s.

Internal party affairs

Deputies and other party members did not have to use the pages of their local journals solely to proclaim their support for de Gaulle's government. They could also launch an attack on Gaullist government policy. Although as publications representing the Gaullist party in the provinces, the journals could be expected to contain a significant amount of party political propaganda, there is evidence of attempts to make them into something more than this. Considering the amount of pressure which was applied by the national party leadership on Gaullist local federations faithfully to reproduce national party campaigns supporting the government's achievements, it is testimony to Gaullism's dynamic vitality that any articles critical of the government appeared at all.

Coverage of the internal affairs of the Gaullist party was not limited to reports of national party meetings, although these were a feature of local newsletters¹³³. Local meetings also received a good deal of coverage¹³⁴. In addition, on many occasions articles appeared which reflected upon the nature of the Gaullist movement. An interesting variety of opinions were expressed, which illustrated the diversity of opinion within the party. For some, its main *raison d'être* was to support de Gaulle. So René Lacombe could write in *La voix de l'Anjou* that the best way for deputies to be sure of the esteem of their fellow citizens, whether they were on the right or the left of the political spectrum, was to model their conduct on that of General de Gaulle¹³⁵. Others who wrote about the Gaullist movement recognised that diversity was an element inherent in all political organisations. During the Algerian drama, divisions within the UNR on whether the territory should or should not remain French were so flagrant that few attempted to hide them. The best that could be hoped for, according to Bernard Fontaine in *Le courrier de la Côte d'Or*, was that such divergences would resolve themselves into “contradictions constructives”¹³⁶.

¹³³ *La voix de Bigorre*, October 1963, accounts of the UNR-UDT's Nice *assises*; *Tour d'Horizon*, January 1964, account of the Nice *assises*; *L'éveil sarthois*, November 1961, account of the “journées nationales” of *Action Ouvrière et Professionnelle*; *L'union savoyarde pour la nouvelle République*, July-August 1967, report of the national meeting of all secretary generals of all local federations; *Le courrier de la Côte d'Or*, November 1960, coverage of a meeting of the UNR National Council.

¹³⁴ *Tour d'Horizon*, February 1964, account of the Moselle UNR-UDT federation's departmental *assises* held at Strasbourg; *L'éveil sarthois*, March 1961, account of the Sarthe UNR-UDT federation's departmental *assises* held at Le Mans; *L'union savoyarde pour la nouvelle République*, July-August 1967, report of a meeting of the local federation.

¹³⁵ Article by René Lacombe, “Le rôle du nouveau député”, *La Voix de l'Anjou*, 14 November 1958.

¹³⁶ *Le courrier de la Côte d'Or*, article by Bernard Fontaine, January 1960.

The tensions over Algeria within the Gaullist party were evident in the party's local bulletins. The next issue of the same newsletter contained an account of a speech made by Colonel Darcy, a member of the central committee of the local party, which was violently critical of the government's approach to the Algerian problem. He attacked the Minister of Justice for allowing the trials of some FLN militants to become open forums where France could be insulted and humiliated. He also criticised the Minister of Justice for failing to execute the head of an Algiers terrorist cell and for making so many other murderers the beneficiaries of an amnesty. The Minister for Information was also at fault, according to Darcy, for allowing the media to place such emphasis on the fact that Lagailarde and Ben Bella had been sharing the same prison cell. As a result, the government had allowed the European community in Algeria to believe that de Gaulle was pro-FLN - a grave error of strategy¹³⁷.

Darcy had more revealing comments to make when Jacques Richard was replaced as secretary general of the national party by Roger Dusseaulx. Commenting on Richard's apparent satisfaction at being relieved of his post, he stressed the difficulty of running a party that was so internally divided. Members of the UNR had come from extremely diverse political backgrounds and for quite different reasons. Some had joined in the hope that de Gaulle would preserve Algeria as part of France, some because they felt that Gaullism was the best protection against the threat of Communism. Similarly, some entered the party because they desired the implementation of a progressive social policy, some

¹³⁷ *Le courrier de la Côte d'Or*, February 1960.

because they wanted an economic policy which would secure French prosperity. Others, meanwhile, had merely come to the UNR in order to serve General de Gaulle, not really considering the detail of particular policies. Keeping all such people united in one party and making them understand that de Gaulle's role as President was one of arbitrator was a difficult task, especially at such a time of tension and drama¹³⁸. Such admissions were infrequent at a time when de Gaulle was attempting to mobilise the support of the whole country, and of the Gaullist party in particular, behind his Algerian policy.

Such comments reveal what really went on inside the Gaullist party. More revealing still was an article written by Philippe Rossillon in *Le courrier de Paris*. He pointed out, no doubt criticising the attitudes of some of his fellow Gaullist sympathisers, that “le militantisme implique l'engagement. Il ne devrait cependant tirer sa force d'un aveuglement, d'une incapacité à penser par soi-même...” He used this argument as justification for a scathing attack on the Gaullist party's attitude towards economic policy. He described it as extremely poor, limited to commentaries on the development of the Plan or of works in the Paris district, forgetting that civil servants, that is to say technocrats, were made to implement policy, not to formulate it. The party had also failed to articulate a distinctive view of foreign policy, preferring to perform the role of “un répétiteur appliqué et souvent maladroit, traduisant en termes de bachotage les leçons magistrales de qui vous savez.” Rossillon was not convinced that the UNR possessed the will to “briller d'un autre

¹³⁸ *Le courrier de la Côte d'Or*, March-April 1961.

éclat que celui conféré par la nullité de l'opposition et les seuls mérites du Chef de l'Etat"¹³⁹. His comments, along with those of Colonel Darcy and Bernard Fontaine, perhaps provide some indication of the tensions which existed beneath the surface of the official Gaullist discourse of unity and discipline.

Criticising the government

In addition to commenting upon internal party affairs and criticising the government, local Gaullist newsletters did move beyond the function of national party propaganda sheet and attempt to make a positive contribution to Gaullist policymaking. René Lacombe wrote a substantial article in *La voix de l'Anjou* concerning the role of the deputy in the Fifth Republic, which stressed the need for constructive criticism¹⁴⁰. Jean-Louis Profichet, in *L'espoir de Montreuil*, spoke of Parliament's duty to be the crucial constitutional link between electors and government. It was the deputy's role to act as the government's representative to the people, and as the people's representative to the government: "être le clinicien de l'opinion"¹⁴¹. Bernard Fontaine, in *Le courrier de la Côte d'Or*, put this idea into practice when he complained that the government's economic policy was not a success. He argued that the Fifth Republic was characterised by inertia. It had restrained the great *élan* to which it owed its existence, and yet had failed to prevent prices from rising¹⁴². Local Gaullist newsletters did attempt on occasion to offer their own opinion on events rather

¹³⁹ *Le courrier de Paris*, July 1963.

¹⁴⁰ *La voix de l'Anjou*, 14 November 1958.

¹⁴¹ *L'espoir de Montreuil*, 1 May 1959.

¹⁴² *Le courrier de la Côte d'Or*, January 1960.

than simply reproducing the government's propaganda. Robert Poujade, the future secretary general of the Gaullist party, repeated the warning about prices in a later issue¹⁴³.

Gabriel Kaspereit reflected the feelings of many rank-and-file Gaullists when he criticised the Faure education reform. He wrote that while the text was no doubt faithful to its proclaimed objectives, it was evidently proposing short-term solutions to immediate problems without tackling the fundamental dilemmas facing the universities. It was a “texte de circonstance”. He argued that the Gaullist deputies should substantially modify the measure by voting a large number of amendments¹⁴⁴. This was exactly what subsequently happened. Local Gaullism did not necessarily need to be uncritically supportive of all government policies. This was further demonstrated by Maurice Lemaire's article in *L'éveil sarthois* which criticised the Fourth Plan¹⁴⁵, and by another, written by an unknown author in *Le courrier de Paris* which complained that the prevailing social climate in 1963 was the worst it had been since 1958. The government's tactics in this domain were extremely poor, the author argued. It should not have denounced the *Sud-Aviation* agreements when it was evident that the unions concerned were satisfied with them, and its attacks on farmers were unjustified, “une hérésie”¹⁴⁶. The same publication complained about the rise in rents for HLMs, the more stringent criteria to qualify for them and their resale to specified tenants, wondering aloud if some ministers were merely occupying their

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, October 1960. The same issue also exhorted the government to pass more “social” measures.

¹⁴⁴ *gème Dernière*, September-October 1968.

¹⁴⁵ *L'éveil sarthois*, June 1962.

¹⁴⁶ *Le courrier de Paris*, July 1963.

posts with the deliberate aim of fomenting social unrest¹⁴⁷. There were those, then, who took seriously Albin-Chalandon's initial encouragement to the party to contribute its own views on social and economic policy. This was occasionally illustrated in the pages of local Gaullist journals. The lack of formal power accorded to the local federations within the party was perhaps the reason why these newsletters could become an ideal place for the expression of discontent. The comments they contain show that some Gaullists did reflect on the meaning of Gaullism and that these reflections could lead them to criticise the activities of Gaullist governments.

The role of the deputy

Gaullist bulletins frequently attempted to generate a sense of local identity by highlighting the parliamentary activities of the deputy. *Le courrier de Clichy-Levallois* regularly noted with satisfaction that the town's deputy had asked ministers a number of searching questions¹⁴⁸. *La Voix de l'Anjou* recorded that the local Gaullist representatives had proposed amendments to an important bill¹⁴⁹. *Le courrier de la Côte d'Or* highlighted the achievement of deputy Berger in tabling two bills at the Assembly, both dealing with old age pensions¹⁵⁰. It was also noted that Robert Poujade had made a speech in the Assembly about education¹⁵¹. *La voix de Bigorre* usually contained a section entitled

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Such as two written questions to the minister for Public Works on noise pollution caused by aircraft (*Le courrier de Clichy-Levallois*, March 1962).

¹⁴⁹ Philippe Rivain and René Lacombe had proposed two amendments to the bill on agricultural insurance (*La Voix de l'Anjou*, 12 May 1960).

¹⁵⁰ *Le courrier de la Côte d'Or*, April 1967.

¹⁵¹ *Le courrier de la Côte d'Or*, July 1967.

“les interventions de M. le Dr Thillard” which detailed the deputy's activities. In 1963, these included a letter to Defence Minister Pierre Messmer concerning reform of the national armoury, a letter to Prime Minister Georges Pompidou about government responses to agricultural disasters and a written question to Agriculture Minister Edgard Pisani on payments made to agricultural workers¹⁵². Such issues would presumably be of interest to Thillard's constituents in Bigorre, many of whom would have been farmers. In one issue of *L'espoir de Montmartre*, Jean Bernasconi was reported as having tabled a bill to facilitate life insurance for those in retirement¹⁵³, and, in another, as having asked the Minister of Health a written question concerning healthcare for foreign workers¹⁵⁴. François Grussenmeyer's interventions in parliament were regularly published in the Rhine's UNR bulletin, *Tour d'Horizon*¹⁵⁵, as were those of other local deputies, André Bord¹⁵⁶, Alfred Westphal¹⁵⁷ and Etienne Hinsberger¹⁵⁸. *Le courrier du Rhin* reprinted a speech made by Edmond Borocco on Algeria¹⁵⁹. André Chapalain's intervention as *rapporteur* for the Education budget was published, as was the record from the *Journal Officiel* of his tabling of an amendment to

¹⁵² *La voix de Bigorre*, September 1963. An article in the issue for January 1964 entitled “l'activité parlementaire du Dr Thillard au cours de 1963” described all his contributions in the Assembly for that year. More written questions he had asked were listed in the editions for June 1964 and September 1964.

¹⁵³ *L'espoir de Montmartre*, September-October 1963.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, December 1963-January 1964.

¹⁵⁵ See for example the issues for September 1962, January-February 1963 and December 1964.

¹⁵⁶ *Tour d'Horizon*, March 1963.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*, December 1964.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*, January 1964.

¹⁵⁹ *Le courrier du Rhin*, 4 January 1961.

an article of the budget¹⁶⁰. By emphasising the involvement of the local deputy in national political affairs, the Gaullist newsletters sought to maintain a sense of local identity among party members. They also sought to showcase the concern of deputies for issues interesting the people they represented. It was clear from the pages of these publications that the focus for local Gaullist consciousness did not always have to be the government or national party leaders, or the local party representative. It was often the deputy for the area.

This sense of local identity was often asserted when the deputies sought to ensure fair treatment by the government for the area which they represented. The activities of Gaullist deputies were not confined to making suggestions to the government on national policy. They would also criticise the government on behalf of the locality that they represented. On one occasion, *L'espoir de Montmartre* pointed out that two ministers had replied in Parliament to a question asked by Jean Bernasconi, concerning the *arrondissement*. Its deputy had argued in a written question for a revision of taxes paid by businesses in the *quartier de la Goutte-d'Or*. The Minister of Economics and Finance, William Baumgartner, refused to grant the request. Even so, according to the journal, the last lines of the long reply illustrate that the question had been worth asking. "Justice pour les commerçants de la Goutte-d'Or!" proclaimed the headline enthusiastically¹⁶¹. In another issue, a letter from Bernasconi to the Minister for Post and Telecommunications was published - the deputy had complained about the lack of public telephone facilities in the area. The reply

¹⁶⁰ *L'éveil sarthois*, January and June 1963.

¹⁶¹ *L'espoir de Montmartre*, October 1961.

was published in the journal the following month¹⁶². *L'espoir de Montreuil* in one issue reported that deputy Profichet had asked the Minister of Labour a written question concerning an increase in the number of workers eligible for supplementary benefits from the *fonds national de solidarité*. A favourable reply had been given, and a bill was being drafted to put the proposal into practice. This was presented as proof that the local deputy was fighting for improvements in the lives of his constituents. "Vieux travailleurs de Montreuil, votre député le Docteur Profichet ne vous oublie pas. Loin de là, car il lutte constamment pour vous", claimed the headline¹⁶³. Robert Poujade had asked a written question about viticulture - an area which would undoubtedly have been of great interest to the winegrowers of the Côte d'Or¹⁶⁴. In some issues of *Tour d'Horizon*, reports described how all of the deputies from the department of the Rhine had been to see ministers to promote the interests of Alsace-Lorraine¹⁶⁵. A speech made by Dr. Thillard in the Assembly which had "persuaded" Olivier Guichard, Minister for *L'aménagement du territoire*, to visit Bigorre, was printed in full in one 1964 issue¹⁶⁶. The UNR deputies representing the Sarthe locality went together to see Premier Michel Debré to try and prevent the closure of a Renault factory at Le Mans¹⁶⁷, and to the Education ministry to influence the reorganisation of education in

¹⁶² *ibid.*, April-May 1962, June 1962.

¹⁶³ *L'espoir de Montreuil*, 18 June 1959.

¹⁶⁴ *Le courrier de la Côte d'Or*, July 1967.

¹⁶⁵ For example Prime Minister Pompidou, twice (*Tour d'Horizon*, February 1964 and May-June 1965) and minister of Agriculture Pisani (*Tour d'Horizon*, May-June 1966). See also December 1964, article entitled "les députés UNR au service de l'agriculture" and March 1965, "Ce que l'UNR a fait pour les agriculteurs".

¹⁶⁶ *La voix de Bigorre*, March 1964. More of Thillard's interventions at the palais Bourbon were printed in the editions for November-December 1965 (a speech on the Fifth Plan) and July 1966 (on maternity leave).

¹⁶⁷ *L'éveil sarthois*, November 1960.

the locality¹⁶⁸. Both Joël Le Theule's speech concerning Renault in the National Assembly and the Minister of Labour's reply were printed in full to show how Gaullist deputies were fighting for local interests¹⁶⁹.

It was evident that some Gaullist deputies did not see their role as being purely to transmit national propaganda on a local level. Often they were concerned to promote local interests actively in the central forums of government, either in Parliament or directly to ministers. This was not incompatible with being a Gaullist. The stress placed on the national dimension of Gaullism by many who have written on the subject can thus be shown to be misleading. Many Gaullists adhered to a vision of Gaullism which accorded a reasonable degree of importance to local politics. In fact, as the next section will show, local concerns became an important element of the Gaullist movement of the 1960s. They actually supported rather well the doctrine which Jacques Baumel had elaborated to give the Gaullist party a clear sense of identity. The comments of de Gaulle on economic development could also prove to be surprisingly relevant to the message put across by local officials. In addition, the importance of the deputy in these journals indicates that Gaullism had not succeeded in eliminating his or her position as the privileged intermediary in relations between the localities and the government. The deputy continued to be the focus for much local political activity.

"L'ardente obligation"

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*, September-October 1961.

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*, December 1960.

Substantial evidence exists of how Gaullism could create a viable local role for itself. The Gaullist party did place a great deal of emphasis on national issues, such as the need to avoid a return to the Fourth Republic. This was not an issue likely to affect the day-to-day life of provincial communities. But another aspect of Gaullism contained a clear message which was of profound relevance for all: the need for efficient modernisation and swift improvement of the living conditions of the French people. Party secretary general Jacques Baumel placed considerable emphasis on this aspect of the Gaullist mission in his many speeches to party members and articles in party bulletins. This harmonised well with de Gaulle's attempts to dramatise domestic affairs, in which he made the improvement of the living conditions of the French people into an immediate objective. One historian described de Gaulle's approach well: "il paraît s'attacher à répandre une *mystique* du développement"¹⁷⁰. Another referred to "the messianic level" at which the General's policies existed¹⁷¹. The tone he used in his public statements was one of *grandeur*, frequently falling into grandiloquence. In a well-known speech of 8 May 1961, he referred to the Plan as an "ardente obligation" for all French people, adding that economic development was the fundamental "grande tâche nationale" for France¹⁷². Economic development became part of the call to greatness. On 2 October 1961, de Gaulle spoke of renewal, modernisation and national renovation¹⁷³. On 5 February 1962, he spoke again of France's

¹⁷⁰ Touchard, *Le gaullisme*, p. 272.

¹⁷¹ Hartley, *Gaullism*, p. 305.

¹⁷² de Gaulle, *Le renouveau*, pp. 314 and 313.

¹⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 349.

development and saluted its “immense rénovation”¹⁷⁴. At the end of 1962, after Algeria had gained independence, and the Gaullists' success in the referendum and legislative elections, de Gaulle considered the country's future: “Le progrès est aujourd'hui notre ambition nationale”. “Regarder loin et viser haut” had to be the nation's priority¹⁷⁵.

In making economic affairs into a great national drama, de Gaulle was trying to exhort his compatriots to ever greater efforts, matching the exalting aims of Gaullism in other domains such as foreign policy. It was this kind of discourse which enabled Gaullism to remain meaningful even in the most apparently prosaic areas of political activities. Repairing schools, building new roads and houses - all were part of the creation and maintenance of French *grandeur*. It was also a useful way of distinguishing the Gaullist party from other parties. One issue of the party journal pointed out that one of the failings of the Fourth Republic was its inability to articulate a coherent policy of urban development. This had led, among other things, to an over-development of the Parisian locality, cramming one-fifth of the French population into poorly-equipped suburbs, at the expense of the provinces which, as a result, were becoming empty deserts¹⁷⁶. Another issue pointed to the success of the Gaullist technocratic approach by highlighting the government's achievements in redeveloping city centres¹⁷⁷. *La Nation*, although it did not have a great deal to say about the activities of local

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p. 383.

¹⁷⁵ de Gaulle, *L'effort*, pp. 54, 55.

¹⁷⁶ *Le courrier de la nouvelle République*, 15 December 1961.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*, May 1962.

federations, frequently focused on urban development. One issue contained a detailed article about the development of Paris, entitled “le Parisien de l'an 2000”, while another provided plans of “le Paris de demain”¹⁷⁸.

It was this kind of approach which enabled Gaullism to remain present as a local force, despite its disappointing showing in local elections and the limitations of the formal power the local federations actually possessed. It was a message which was well suited to local Gaullist politics. Possibly using the comments of Baumel and de Gaulle as an inspiration, those who wrote in local Gaullist newsletters stressed the need for improvements in the immediate environment. A particularly telling headline in one issue of *L'espoir de Montmartre* read “Avec Charles de Gaulle, construisons ensemble le Paris de nos enfants”¹⁷⁹. The renovation of city centres and restoration of local buildings thus became an important part of Gaullist policy. In the same journal for February 1966, a large photograph of a derelict building was printed on the front page, accompanied by the comment “Ceci est une école, le savez-vous M. Fouchet?” Several pages were devoted to the story of the school's neglect and the demand that it be repaired. It was reported that Jean Bernasconi, the local Gaullist deputy, had tabled written questions to Fouchet, the Minister for Education, to insist that action be taken¹⁸⁰. Articles such as this show how Gaullism could be at once a critic of the government and a modernising agent for local improvements - all of which were part of the Gaullist project.

¹⁷⁸ *La Nation*, 7 January 1965, 13 June 1966.

¹⁷⁹ *L'espoir de Montmartre*, March 1965.

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.*, February 1966.

Many more articles in Gaullist local bulletins concern themselves with *l'aménagement du territoire*. *Le courrier de Clichy-Levallois* published many articles on the need for more affordable homes¹⁸¹, on the development of the Paris locality¹⁸² and on the need to improve the local road network¹⁸³. One issue of *La voix de l'Anjou* devoted its central pages to the topic of local expansion¹⁸⁴. *Le courrier de la Côte-d'Or* focused on the locality's potential if developed¹⁸⁵. *L'espoir de Montmartre* described in one issue what the area surrounding La Chapelle would resemble in two years' time¹⁸⁶, as part of a broader attempt to explain why there was so much work in progress in Paris¹⁸⁷. It also outlined projects for the *arrondissement*, publishing the plans for the *boulevard périphérique*, a new lycée, community centre, youth centre and sports stadium¹⁸⁸ and boasted that there were ten times more motorways built during the Fifth Republic than during the Fourth¹⁸⁹. One issue of *9^e Dernière* included an article congratulating local deputy Gabriel Kaspereit for ensuring that a new local sports stadium would be built¹⁹⁰, while others concentrated on the redevelopment of Paris or the future shape of France¹⁹¹. A report on the construction of the new railway station "Auber", part of the new *Réseau Express*

¹⁸¹ *Le courrier de Clichy-Levallois*, December 1961, March 1962 and April-May 1964.

¹⁸² *ibid.*, March 1962, article entitled "l'avenir de la région parisienne"

¹⁸³ *ibid.*, December 1964, article entitled "Pour un réseau routier mieux adapté".

¹⁸⁴ *La voix de l'Anjou*, 24 May 1961.

¹⁸⁵ *Le courrier de la Côte-d'Or*, December 1966, article entitled "La Côte-d'Or, un atout pour l'aménagement du territoire".

¹⁸⁶ *L'espoir de Montmartre*, July-August 1963.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*, November-December 1964, article entitled "Pourquoi tous ces travaux à Paris?"

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*, February 1965, article entitled "Le 18^e arrondissement: des projets..."

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.*, January 1967.

¹⁹⁰ *9^e Dernière*, May 1964.

¹⁹¹ *ibid.*, June-July 1964, article entitled "Refaire Paris"; December 1964, article entitled "Le V^e Plan prépare la France de 1985"; February 1965, article entitled "Pour le renouveau de Paris"; May-June 1966, article entitled "Aujourd'hui se façonne le Paris de demain".

Régional (RER), in 1965 emphasised the efficiency of the Fifth Republic in getting all this done¹⁹². Similar issues were addressed by *Le courrier de Paris*, which published one article entitled “A propos du Paris du XXI^e siècle”¹⁹³.

In this way the evidence provided by Gaullist local newsletters illustrates the potential of Gaullism to exert a dynamic influence at the local level. By treating *l'aménagement du territoire* as an important political issue, some Gaullists were attempting to ensure that Gaullism would not be dominated solely by a national perspective. By focusing on how Gaullism could be made relevant to local affairs, they articulated a definition of it which had its own distinctive flavour, and which did not merely resume the arguments of national party leaders. Gaullism could also be a vehicle for the modernisation of France and the improvement of the living conditions of its people.

de Gaulle RIP: the 1969 referendum

The presidency of Charles de Gaulle finally came to an end on 28 April 1969, the morning after his defeat in a referendum. This poll had been held to approve or disapprove the creation of new organs of local government and the reform of the Senate. In many ways this defeat was the culmination of a difficult last year in power which had seen considerable change in the French political landscape and within Gaullism. Yet at the same time it illustrated the difficult relationship Gaullism had always maintained with local politics.

¹⁹² *ibid.*, July-August 1965.

¹⁹³ *Le courrier de Paris*, December 1963.

The succession of Pompidou to the presidential office in the event of de Gaulle's departure now seemed beyond doubt. Even though Pompidou had been removed as Prime Minister in the aftermath of the events of May 1968, he was still regarded by many within the UDR as their leader. This removed a considerable element of de Gaulle's mystique. He could no longer claim that his defeat would lead to chaos, because it was evident that he would now leave behind him a reliable President who would be supported by a well-organised and disciplined party. The Gaullist movement had come a long way since its inception as a coalition of different groups formed to support the General's reform of the constitution. It was now a recognisable political force that intended to survive well beyond the General's departure from office. This is not a development that could have been taken for granted in 1958.

Pompidou's readiness to become President seemed to have been confirmed by de Gaulle himself, who had spoken of him at the time of his removal as Prime Minister as being placed “en réserve de la République”¹⁹⁴. To many observers this was a clear indication that Pompidou was the President's designated successor. Whatever the truth of this assumption, it also seemed to be confirmed when Pompidou appeared to suggest in an interview conducted by French journalists in Rome that he was ready to stand in a presidential election whenever this occurred. Given that at this time de Gaulle was fighting a referendum campaign, this could only reinforce an impression that there was

¹⁹⁴ Touchard, *Le gaullisme*, p. 284.

no pressing need to support the President on this occasion. It was now safe to say no to the General.

Such a development would have been unthinkable only a few years earlier, when there had been no serious alternative to de Gaulle standing for re-election as President of the Republic. Now, however, the Gaullist movement was sufficiently cohesive and self-confident to envisage the future without him. Without the contributions made during the decade by ministers, party leaders and deputies, maybe this would not have been the case. All these developments contributed to the defeat of the President in his referendum and his departure from office.

It seemed strange that the General should want to fight a referendum on decentralisation. After all, one of his main objectives had always been to unite the French people against the divisive forces which caused them to quarrel with each other and weaken the state. Gaullism had distinguished itself during the 1960s as a force for national unity. Yet May 68 had come as a great disappointment to the President, and he had decided that the answer to the problems which had caused those events was participation. Not participation of the workers in the management of the companies which employed them, as desired by the *gaullistes de gauche*, but participation in the conduct of national affairs. Reform of the education system was, as we have seen, a central part of the response to the events. Decentralisation was the other.

The campaign for the referendum was rather half-hearted, but the proposed measure does show how Gaullism was attempting to concede some relevance to local concerns. The project, elaborated by Jean-Marcel Jeanneney, was designed to

make the region into the central organ of French local government and to enable the French people to participate more directly in local government. New regional councils were to be created which, under the guidance of a regional prefect, would see to the application of the Plan in the area for which they had responsibility. The members of these councils were not to be elected by universal suffrage. Sixty per cent were to be selected by the *conseillers généraux* and members of the municipal councils, while the remaining members would be chosen by professional organisations such as agricultural unions, trades unions, professional associations and social and cultural organisations. The reform aroused little enthusiasm, although it received less criticism than the reform of the Senate with which it was bundled¹⁹⁵. This measure removed that body's role in the legislative process and aroused a good deal of opposition. The president of the Senate, Alain Poher, who would eventually be a presidential candidate in 1969, refused to accept that the body could be “assassiné dans l’ombre blafarde d’un référendum”. One evening when the project was being defended in the Senate by Jeanneney and former minister Olivier Guichard, they were the object of so many insults that they had to leave¹⁹⁶. Many Gaullists tried to dissuade de Gaulle from holding the referendum at all, and the *Républicains Indépendants*, led by Giscard and allies of the Gaullists, publicly defected, refusing to support the measure¹⁹⁷.

A central reason for holding this twin-pronged referendum was de Gaulle's desire to renew his national contract with the

¹⁹⁵ Berstein, *La République gaullienne*, pp. 333-4.

¹⁹⁶ Guichard, *Mon Général*, p. 438.

¹⁹⁷ Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, pp. 752-5.

French people by giving them a chance to provide a striking demonstration of their confidence in him. As this confidence was not forthcoming, he resigned. Perhaps this illustrates the fundamental problem with Gaullism's relationship with local politics. Although parts of its message could be adapted to local concerns and Gaullism ended up creating a well-organised mass-membership party with strong local branches by the mid-1970s, it continued to place heavy emphasis on the importance of national issues. This particular reform was too obviously undertaken as a matter of national political expediency and thus perhaps inevitably doomed to failure.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to highlight how the Gaullist party changed during the 1960s. It set out wanting to be a new kind of political movement that would do credit to the new political culture that de Gaulle had hoped for after reforming the constitution. By reaching out directly to different sections of the population, rather than relying on the deputy to communicate the Gaullist message, the national party leadership hoped to minimise the role of intermediaries in the same way that reducing the power of the National Assembly had lessened the importance of the representatives of electors. In both cases, the ultimate ambition was to remove the deputy from the centre stage of political life. In both cases, it remained unfulfilled. Deputies continued to play a part both in Parliament and in the local federations of the Gaullist party. Evidence from party newsletters suggests that they remained the focus of local Gaullist activity. In the remodelled,

well-organised UDR, which was most concerned with acquiring new members, they remained the most effective link between people and government. They continued to demand favours for the constituencies they represented, ensuring the survival of a sense of distinctively local political culture.

This chapter has also attempted to question an oft-repeated argument concerning Gaullism - that it did not make a concerted attempt to address the everyday concerns of French people, as expressed in local politics. It has been argued that Gaullism could only thrive at a time of exceptional national crisis, such as during the Second World War or the early years of the Fifth Republic. This is why de Gaulle's comments on economics were intended to intimidate the French, as they did during the 1965 presidential election campaign, into believing that disaster was a constant risk and that ever greater effort was necessary to prevent it. Yet this was more than mere cynical election manoeuvring. Although it is difficult to obtain detailed evidence about the local federations in the 1960s, it is clear that Gaullism could be, in the hands of some, a vehicle for the articulation of a sense of local identity. The need for modernisation and practical improvements so often re-iterated by national secretary general Jacques Baumel was an effective vision within which the apparently prosaic matters of local affairs could be transformed into the grand national design which Gaullism claimed to represent. As Serge Bernstein has argued,

“Puisque la politique n'est après tout que l'art du possible, ce n'est pas un mince succès que de rendre un peuple fier de

lui-même en transmuant par le discours le vil plomb des faits en or de la légende”¹⁹⁸.

This was a primary aim of Gaullism, and in the pages of their local newsletters, some Gaullists sought to transform the lead of local politics into the gold of great modernising achievements. This could have been a reaction against the attempts by the party leadership to marginalise the influence of the local federations within the party. Gaullist leaders were concerned that they might become a focus for divisions within the party; hence their initial attempts to use alternative means of internal organisation such as *Action ouvrière* and *Action agricole*. Yet there were Gaullists who did not let this prevent them from having their say on local and national matters. In having their say, they contributed to a different emphasis within Gaullism, which created a special place for local concerns as opposed to the grandeur of France's mission on the world stage. In fact, the modernising vision of Gaullism as articulated by both Baumel and de Gaulle could be effectively used to campaign on behalf of these local concerns. Gaullists who served the party in the localities did not believe that this compromised the national mission of Gaullism. This chapter has attempted to illustrate that their contribution was a valuable one which, along with the contributions of other Gaullists outlined in previous chapters, highlights the complexity of Gaullism.

¹⁹⁸ Berstein, *La république gaullienne*, p. 350.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has sought to question some of the widely accepted perceptions of Gaullism during the 1960s. The first such perception is that Gaullism consisted of little more than the actions and beliefs of Charles de Gaulle. This interpretation, which continues to affect much writing on Gaullism today, was introduced in the opening chapter. Many of those who have written on Gaullism, historians, political scientists, journalists, politicians and other commentators, have concentrated perhaps excessively on the personality of “l'homme du 18 juin”. This has led to a limited understanding of the broader complexity of Gaullism.

In many ways this approach is understandable. Gaullism originated with de Gaulle, and for a long time his followers understood it in terms of personal loyalty to the heroic individual who by this account had initiated resistance to the German occupation. As a means of understanding Gaullism during the 1960s, however, this perspective grows increasingly less useful. The analyst has to adjust his or her understanding of Gaullism to take into account the changed circumstances of this decade. In the first place, Gaullism was no longer a movement which needed to define itself through resistance or opposition. It was a movement which had achieved its primary aim of bringing de Gaulle to power and altering the French constitution in order to suit his temperament. It was thus in the position of a revolutionary group which had brought about a successful revolution, and was now forced to redefine its goals for a new era. This complex process of redefinition continued throughout the 1960s. It cannot be

explained in terms of de Gaulle alone. The Gaullist movement now contained ministers, party officials, party members, deputies, mayors, *conseillers municipaux* and *conseillers généraux*. This amounted to an unprecedented involvement on the part of the Gaullists in the political system; involvement which had begun during the Fourth Republic but which was only fully realised during the Fifth. All such people had a stake in the new regime and in the political movement which sought to make it work. It was inevitable that some should feel that they had a valuable contribution to make to Gaullism. As a result, Gaullism became a phenomenon which encapsulated a great deal more than the thoughts and actions of President de Gaulle, and its definition became a dynamic process, the practical workings of which this thesis has sought to delineate.

The second main point about Gaullism which this thesis seeks to communicate also has its origin in the problems raised by the historiography of the subject. To understand Gaullism fully, the historian must take account of its evolution during the 1960s and take account of the activities of the Gaullists in this process. The view that Gaullism refers primarily to the actions and beliefs of de Gaulle has been accompanied by the assumption that being a Gaullist meant being an obedient functionary whose role was to execute orders dictated from above. Interest in the contributions of the Gaullists to the governing process has consequently been limited. It is this imbalance which this thesis has also aimed to redress. The four central chapters of the thesis seek to show how, at the different levels of the party, there were Gaullists who had their own ideas about what Gaullism meant and how this should be translated into practical government measures. This was

perhaps not enough to dispel the prevailing impression that the Gaullist party lacked the spirit for internal debate. But it was sufficient to show that some ministers, national party administrators, deputies and local party officials all attempted, with limited degrees of success, to make a contribution to a modern vision of Gaullism. Far from being subservient executors of the General's will, there were Gaullists with their own, often contradictory, priorities which they envisaged as the future basis of Gaullism after the General had left office.

At the very highest level of government, several Gaullists had their own ideas about the principles which Gaullism should represent. Michel Debré, for example, felt that it should allow a substantial role for Parliament. While the new constitution, generally understood to be "Gaullist", undoubtedly emphasised the reinforcement of the power of the President, Gaullism should not as a result become a force for presidential government. Achille Peretti, on the other hand, felt that the new system was inconsistent with itself and thus proposed that it acquire an even more presidential character, with the introduction of a Vice-President who would be automatically seen as the successor to the President. It is thus evident that the new institutions which de Gaulle had sought to bring about were not universally approved by all Gaullists. A few of them were willing to analyse France's new institutional arrangements and propose ideas which they still felt were not incompatible with Gaullism. It seems reasonable to assume that there were others who agreed with such ideas but who did not speak out.

In addition, the way in which Gaullist ministers conducted government business revealed a great deal about what they

thought Gaullism should mean. Successive Prime Ministers, particularly Georges Pompidou, although they never provoked open conflict with the President, gradually assumed greater influence and status in the course of their time in office, to the extent of being regarded as the real head of government. In Debré's case, during the early years of the Fifth Republic, it was more a matter of quietly using his chairmanship of committees and management of the parliamentary majority to ensure that the measures he wanted were speedily implemented. The premiership of Pompidou, however, witnessed a much greater involvement of the Prime Minister at the very heart of decision-making, which on occasion included opposing the President's point of view at meetings of the *conseil des ministres*. At the same time, Pompidou provided an increased public profile for the role of Prime Minister, including much-reported visits to the French regions or visits abroad. It was no doubt as a reaction to the prominent position of Pompidou that de Gaulle chose to appoint Maurice Couve de Murville, a much quieter operator, as Prime Minister, in 1968. During the events of May of that year, the President had begun to be eclipsed by Pompidou, a risk he was not prepared to take again. This open acknowledgement of his own weakness served as a revealing indication of the power assumed by the Prime Minister during the decade. This development showed that Gaullists did not always have to be the obedient functionaries which contemporaries and subsequently some analysts have often suggested them to be. Far from seeing it as their duty to serve the President, some of his supporters appeared more concerned with taking his place at the head of government. This was the context in which Gaullism operated during the 1960s.

Ministers, too, did attempt to achieve a degree of independence within the Gaullist system. They carried out committee work which gave them significant influence over their department's affairs. Ministers such as Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Edgard Pisani acquired prominent public profiles as they dealt with the problems arising in their particular sphere of responsibility. Furthermore, ministers did not just assume importance for their handling of government affairs; they also occasionally took an individual stand against the President's initiatives. Jacques Soustelle's struggle against de Gaulle's Algerian policy in 1959, Antoine Pinay's opposition to his anti-Americanism in 1960, Pierre Sudreau's opposition to his reform of the constitution in 1962 and Edgard Pisani's resignation over the government's approach to the events of May 1968 were four examples of this. Governmental stability, which Gaullist propaganda claimed was the main feature of the new regime, was often more apparent than real; there were frequent changes of ministers, which, while they lacked the drama of the Fourth Republican cabinet crisis, were nevertheless indicative of internal government disputes. Gaullist government was a complex process in which not all ministers were content to assume a subordinate role.

In making such arguments, this thesis has hoped to show that the reputation that the Gaullists acquired for unthinking obedience has been exaggerated. Within the Gaullist party, too, there was some scope for individual initiative, despite the public professions of loyalty necessary for a party which aimed to support de Gaulle. As the activities of certain party administrators such as Albin Chalandon and Jacques Baumel show, support for

the President did not prevent them from reflecting upon their position as Gaullists and upon the nature of Gaullism. They were aware that although the party was closely associated with de Gaulle, as they frequently reiterated in public meetings and internal party newsletters, it could not afford to confine itself to supporting all that the President undertook. Without a clear identity which would be independent of the General, Gaullism would not survive. They thus sought to some extent to separate the party from the President and his government. Chalandon's initial attempts to invent the UNR as an independent party which would offer a critical perspective on government economic policy eventually proved too controversial during the early years of the Fifth Republic. This was, after all, a time when the government was primarily concerned with the resolution of the Algerian problem and could not risk the erosion of its parliamentary support for other reasons. Chalandon's conduct thus came to be seen by many within the party (not to mention the government) as inappropriate and he was replaced as its secretary general. Given the extreme tension prevailing in French public life during the Algerian conflict, it is testimony to the dynamic vitality of certain Gaullists that they should seek to establish an independent, critical voice at this time. Even at the most sensitive political junctures, there were Gaullists who were prepared to offer alternative visions of what Gaullist government policy should be.

Jacques Baumel was following Chalandon's example when he sought to articulate a vision of Gaullism which required little or no reference to its founder. He used similar language to Chalandon, speaking of Gaullism in terms of modernity, efficiency and sound management. Although his vision was not particularly

original or unique in this period (Kennedy in the USA and Wilson in the UK used strikingly similar language), it was a vital step in the evolution of Gaullism from being a network of loyal followers to being a modern political party. His work came to fruition with the reinvention of the Gaullist party as the *Union des démocrates pour la République* in 1967 and the appointment of the young Robert Poujade as its secretary general. In its new guise, the Gaullist party spoke Baumel's language of modernisation and improvement of living conditions while at the same time becoming a more effectively organised electoral machine.

Having given itself an independent identity, Gaullism also gave itself the means to ensure victory in electoral contests. This process was not a smooth one. There were those in the party, most notably René Capitant and Louis Vallon, who objected to the direction the party was taking. The ultimate shape of the Gaullist party was not to the liking of all. More departures followed in the early 1970s, such as that of Alexandre Sanguinetti and Christian Fouchet, who claimed no longer to recognise Gaullism in the new Gaullist party. They claimed that the new party was not faithful to the ideals of the General. These were telling events which illustrated the Gaullist movement's unease with the very notion of a political party. Chalandon, Baumel and Poujade, aided by their supporters, had sought to redefine Gaullism as a modern political movement which need not be forever tied to one man. This was a unique and distinctive contribution to Gaullism which enabled it to remain politically significant after the General's departure from office in 1969 and beyond, so that it has survived, in a much-modified and disputed form, up to the present day.

One of the claims of Baumel and Chalandon, that the Gaullist party would not survive without its own distinctive identity, was aimed at a particular audience. They must have hoped that it would strike a chord with those interested in a career in politics, the Gaullist deputies. They were a diverse group who had been drawn to Gaullism from varied social and political backgrounds, and the risk of disunity was great. No sooner had the UNR won its surprise victory in the legislative elections of 1958 than it was confronted by an internal crisis which almost provoked the disintegration of the party. Although this risk decreased after the Evian Agreements had been signed, the Gaullist party still contained individuals with contrasting beliefs. It still retained some of its original nature, which was that of a *coalition*. A clear purpose, around which as many as possible could rally, was thus imperative. The *gaullistes de gauche* of the UDT, for example, who had joined the UNR after the 1962 legislative elections, were often unhappy with the government's social policies, or the lack thereof, and said so in their periodical, *Notre République*. In addition, the *Républicains Indépendants*, although not part of the Gaullist party, were its partners in the parliamentary majority and their views also had to be taken into account. Establishing a distinctive identity was a vital means both of uniting the government's disparate parliamentary majority and of binding the Gaullist movement together, to ensure that it would not split as soon as de Gaulle left office.

This strategy, of using public discourse to provide party members with clear principles to which all could adhere, was a success in that it gave the Gaullist party an identity which was less dependent on de Gaulle. Yet it did not curb the internal dynamics

of the Gaullist parliamentary party. Some deputies followed the example of Baumel and Chalandon by seeking to influence the government. They could attempt to achieve this in a number of ways, through informal contacts, through the specialised study groups or by making speeches in Parliament. Some sought to exert pressure on the government on behalf of their constituents. When dissatisfied with a government measure, they might draft their own alternative in a specialised study group. In the parliamentary arena of the Palais Bourbon, they spoke their minds on a variety of subjects, most frequently education and agriculture. In so doing they did not adhere strictly to the rhetoric of de Gaulle or to the rhetoric of the party leaders; they were concerned mainly to maintain a separate voice. This was not the behaviour of “inconditionnels”, programmed to obey the government's instructions; it was the conduct of deputies who were determined to make an impact on policy. In the process they showed that they believed that Gaullism was not incompatible with active involvement in political debate.

In the regions, too, there were a few Gaullists with their own ideas about Gaullism. This was illustrated by some of the comments made in local Gaullist newsletters. Most newsletters were primarily concerned with spreading Gaullist propaganda and campaigning in elections, so that it is all the more remarkable that articles criticising the government appeared. The fact that they did shows that despite the lack of evidence about the beliefs of Gaullist voters, even at local level there were those whose vision of Gaullism was not realised by the actions of Gaullist governments. This is valuable evidence that Gaullism was not regarded purely as the beliefs of de Gaulle.

Given that Gaullism as defined by de Gaulle was characterised primarily as an impulse to national unity, it seemed that it could never be relevant to the mundane issues of local politics. Yet during the decade, it became evident that Gaullism could be an effective vehicle for the expression of local grievances against the national government. There were deputies who used their local party newsletter to highlight the efforts they were making to ensure their region was well treated by the central government. They also used the publications to complain to the government about inadequate local facilities. In this way they showed that to be a Gaullist was to act independently, not merely to follow a leader. Some Gaullists were keen to make a contribution to national life, even if only a small one such as ensuring that local public telephone facilities were repaired. In fact such issues could become part of the Gaullist campaign to modernise France. Some showed that the approach to politics defined by Baumel and others could be an encouragement to local people to examine their local environment and campaign for its improvement.

This thesis sought to establish that Gaullism in the 1960s cannot be reduced to the achievements of its founder. Political movements must always be studied in terms of the political context within which they evolve. Concentrating on de Gaulle does not enable us to do this adequately. Gaullism was defined by all those who were involved in it; ministers, deputies, party administrators and local activists who did not all share the same vision of Gaullism. It was not an inflexible dogma, defined by the General and implemented in the years after 1958. It was a much-debated, fluid concept, the development and articulation of which

over the decade was a complex process. It is this process which this thesis has sought to bring to life.

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