CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES ON THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY: A DYING IDEOLOGY?

A thesis submitted to the Kent State University Honors College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for University Honors

by

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May, 2013
The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. WORKING MEN OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!
–Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels

Derrière la crise du système capitaliste qui se déroule sous nos yeux, il y a la possibilité d’un monde meilleur. Nous devons la saisir. Elle est à notre portée. Encore faut-il que nous le décidions. […] Tous ces maux trouvent leur commune origine dans la caractéristique essentielle de notre époque : la domination sans partage du capital financier sur le monde. Or cette domination en apparence inébranlable est en réalité d’une grande fragilité. Car elle dépend tout entière de choix politiques que les peuples peuvent inverser. Affrontons la finance et nous retrouverons rapidement un avenir.
–L’humain d’abord: Le programme du Front du Gauche et de son candidat commun Jean-Luc Melenchon

Behind the capitalist system’s crisis, unfolding before our eyes, there exists the possibility of a better world. We must grab hold of it. It is within our reach. Still, we must decide to attain it. […] All evil arises from the key characteristic of our time: capitalist domination of the world. Although this domination seems unshakeable, it is in reality very delicate as it depends entirely on political choices which the people can overturn. Let us confront the business class and swiftly find again a future.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For the extraordinary attention that he has put into helping this work become a reality, I would first and foremost like to thank Dr. Matthew A. Kemp, the advisor of this senior honors thesis. I would also like to thank my professors at Kent State University, particularly those who have aided me in mastering the French language, a skill that allowed me to pursue this research. Besides Dr. Kemp, these professors are Dr. Richard M. Berrong and Dr. Maryann De Julio. Furthermore, I owe the professors of the Political Science Department at Kent State University my gratitude for developing my familiarity with the intricacies of political discourse. Thank you to the Honors College at Kent State University for their encouragement to challenge oneself with such academic endeavors as this. A final thank you to family and friends who have lent their much-needed support over the course of this project.
1. Introduction

One cannot deny that a strong Leftist tradition is deeply rooted in France. Emerging from the time of the French Revolution of 1789, which overthrew the absolute monarchy along with the last vestiges of the landed aristocracy, this leftist tendency would crystallize around the universalist principles of equality and liberty, and during the latter part of the nineteenth century, would come to be durably influenced by Marxist ideology. In the wake of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, and rising to prominence during the inter-war period, two political parties, the Parti socialiste (PS), the Socialist Party, and the Parti communiste français (PCF), the French Communist Party came to dominate the left in France, and would both emerge as major political forces on the French political landscape after World War II. Whereas the PS is today a permanent fixture in the French party system, and has regularly been elected to government having even produced two elected presidents (François Mitterrand, 1981-1995, and François Hollande, 2012-present), the PCF has not experienced the same level of longevity or electoral success. Indeed, the party has been in steady decline since the late 1970s, but remarkably has not disappeared (see figures 2-3).

One key question which arises concerns whether or not the contemporary PCF continues to exert any real influence at all in a political system which has worked to the favor of larger, more centrist parties, with broad-based appeal. One could also ask
whether the PCF now exists more as an outdated ideological tradition than as a political entity with any realistic chance to bring about substantive change in a society in which capitalism is (reluctantly) embraced and firmly entrenched.

This research project is organized into three main parts. Firstly, drawing on available scholarship from both French and English sources (primarily books and articles), I provide a literature review which examines some key texts on the PCF, and highlights some of the key moments in the PCF's existence, charting its rise to political prominence after World War II, its electoral success during the 1940s through to the 1960s, then its rapid decline from the end of the 1970s to the present. Here, I will consider whether the appeal of the party's ideological platform, as opposed to the impact of other external economic, social or political factors unrelated to the party itself, is the most satisfactory explanation for the PCF's electoral success during the immediate post-war period. Throughout the literature review section, I examine not only what prominent scholars have said about the PCF over the course of its history, but also how this interfaces or not with the Party's contemporary ideology.

The subsequent portion of the investigation is presented in the form of two case studies, which set out to analyze the PCF's current positions on a series of contemporary political, economic, and social questions. Here, I propose to first look at the PCF's discourse pertaining to the French and European economies along with related questions on the Party's stance on capitalism and its view of the European debt crisis. My second, somewhat shorter case study will examine the PCF's position on what is perhaps the most
significant foreign policy question facing French policy-makers today, France's intervention in Mali.

The key findings in this research aim to shed light on the PCF's current platform as it relates to the politics it has employed throughout its evolution as a political party. This evolution can be split into three main parts: pre-World War II, when the Party was developing its doctrine and leaning heavily on the directives of Moscow, then the period from about 1945 to 1971 as a time of relative success for the Party having reached its peak in the 1945 election, and finally the period spanning 1971 to the present day, which can be largely characterized as one of significant and rapid decline. 1971 to present-day has been a period of decline. Throughout the three blocks of time, the PCF has stood consistently and vehemently against capitalism, yet throughout its period of decline it has become decreasingly "revolutionary." We will see through the two case studies which follow, that the PCF has been vehement in its critique of Europe's current political institutions, policy makers and proposed resolutions to the European debt crisis, as all are aligned with Western capitalism, but it is relatively quiet when it comes to offering solutions of its own. Also demonstrated in its official pronouncements is a militant and urgent tone, consistent with the texts of all periods of the PCF's history. The current worldview of the Party will also become apparent in discourses pertaining to the violence currently transpiring in many parts of Africa. I will specifically discuss their commentary on the situation in Mali. The violence erupting in this part of the world, the PCF asserts, is due to an antagonistic relationship between the First World and the Third World theorized by Marx in the mid-nineteenth century. The oppression of the Third world by
the First world is essentially equivalent to the oppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. Through my research and analysis, I hope to make apparent the unique role that the PCF plays as a part of French political culture, assess its effectiveness as a political power, and contribute discourse on a political platform that has received little attention as of late.
2. Methodology

With regard to the methodological approach that I adopted for this project, it was first important to establish why this topic was relevant. While there has been a great deal of research conducted on the PCF's history, a notable imbalance of scholarly research has emerged between the French Far Right and the Far Left, and this has been particularly pronounced in recent years. This imbalance is demonstrated when one conducts a search of the "French Far Right" on Amazon.com and then its parallel on Amazon.fr. Such a search reveals a substantial number of titles centering chiefly on the Front national (FN), the party of the French Far Right\(^1\) whereas a similar search for its counterpart, the "French Far Left" reveals a far more limited corpus of work.\(^2\) It was therefore evident that a study of the PCF's positions on contemporary events constituted a relevant area of research, and one which could redress the current lack of scholarship in this domain.

\(^1\) Search on Amazon.com: The Development of the Radical Right in France: From Boulanger to Le Pen [Le Pen, founder of the National Front] by Edward J. Arnold (2000), The Extreme Right in France, 1789 to the
Another point which I have noted over the course of my research and in such searches as these, is the differences between the titles themselves. The analyses of the Far Right tended to span from some point in the past to today. Their counterparts of the Far Left had a tendency to begin at some point in the past only to end somewhere around the 1970s or 1980s (the "decline") as if the Party only exists as a distant relic of the past.

These initial findings led me to frame my examination of the contemporary PCF platform on the historical data compiled on the Party's electoral performance and, of course, on existing analyses of the evolution of the party since its conception, in 1920. An exhaustive look at the PCF's history in tandem with an examination of the Party's contemporary positions on key political question would allow me to identify areas of continuity and change, and would enable me to advance hypotheses to account for this. Thus I conducted an extensive literary review and tried to remain attentive to certain themes which may or may not continue to underscore contemporary PCF positions or debates today.

From the collection of texts that I had gathered emerged several intertwined motifs which seem central to understanding the present-day PCF. First, the PCF faced a massive and irreversible decline beginning in the 1970s. The themes of decline, erosion, fragility and failure permeate scholarship on the history of the Party. This seems fundamentally related to an inability to adapt to rapidly changing social and economic conditions in France over the course of the last fifty years. Secondly, the PCF has always been a revolutionary party. Its ultimate goal is the complete overhaul of society as we
know it – that is, the public must realize the destruction resulting from capitalist dominance and reject this system in favor of a stateless, classless and moneyless society. From this theme, the contemporary PCF's commentary on the current economic circumstances facing Europe has become manifest. The third significant theme that I noticed was the PCF's constant attention to the class struggle. This closely relates to their interpretation of economic conditions, but also 1) ties the Party to the working class and 2) necessitates a class-struggle-based worldview, central to which is the antagonistic relationship between the First World and the Third World.

With these three themes pulled from historical analyses on the PCF in mind, I aimed to remain attentive to their existence in Party's current publications. To what extent has the Party remained true to the pillars of its original ideology? To what extent has the Party adapted to the modern world? To what extent does the Party recognize the ever-increasing decline in popularity and influence it has faced since the 1970s?

In an attempt to answer these questions, I studied texts disseminated by the PCF itself. Considering the massive lack of scholarship on today's PCF – previously illustrated by the searches done on Amazon.com – this seemed the best, if not the only option. Using articles from the Party's website, PCF.fr, as the backbone for my examination of the role of the PCF in the modern world allowed me to base my conclusions exclusively on the pronouncements of the Party itself as opposed to a version of these comments provided by a third party, such as a journalist or a historian. Essentially my approach was a heuristic one in that I was testing the hypothesis that the PCF had undergone an irreversible decline, and that it continues to draw on well-established communist ideology
in its analysis of contemporary events but without pre-committing myself to this being the case. PCF.fr is comprehensive in its commentary on contemporary issues.

Accordingly, I was able to pull many citations from these articles, many of which I included as block-quotes. I often did this, rather than paraphrase or shorten the citations, as the language and terminology employed by the PCF is arguably just as important as the subject matter itself. I determined that including these excerpts would play an important role in the understanding of the conclusions I draw about the contemporary PCF. Moreover, upon an extensive reading of many articles on PCF.fr, it became evident to me that the European economic crisis and France's intervention in Mali were two themes which attracted sustained commentary. This is not to say that the PCF has not been vocal on many other political issues, such as climate change, public health and other debates, but it was important to establish a manageable scope for the project. This would permit me to analyze the material in depth and gain a conclusive understanding on the questions which have formed my hypotheses.
3. Literature Review

In order to situate my two case studies on the PCF's positions on the European economic crisis and France's intervention in Mali, this section provides a literature review of some key works which examine the historical evolution of the PCF. Numerous authors, Roger Martelli, Stéphane Courtois and Marc Lazar among others, have done an enormous amount of work to preserve a record of the PCF and to provide analysis of the success and failure of the Party. While such analyses often provide similar historical facts about the Party, one can often discern a range of positions on the degree to which the PCF remains relevant or not in the contemporary French political landscape. Martelli, for example, has furnished us with a rather pessimistic take on the influence and politics of the PCF while it is apparent that Courtois looks at its past and future in a more positive light, considering the Party's place in French society and political culture to be of worth.

In *L'empreinte communiste: PCF et société française 1920-2010*, Martelli outlines the trends and events that have brought the PCF from its conception to what it is today. He begins by discussing the conception of the PCF (originally called the *Parti socialiste*, the Socialist Party, which has no connection the the *Parti socialiste* that exists in France today) in 1920 and the importance of the Party's relationship with Moscow from the beginning. Their association with the Soviet Union would remain tight, if sometimes conflictual, arguably until the end of the Cold War. This relationship ties into
one of the most important factors in answering our question; why does the communist party continue to exist in France when communism as a system seems to have declined markedly as an ideological paradigm on the contemporary global political landscape?³

After explaining the historical origin of the PCF and its early years, Martelli goes on to examine the period coinciding with the end of World War II. Simply put, this is the time when the Party "gets the hang of things" defining a true political culture and gaining popularity. Largely thanks to many French communists' heavy involvement in the French Resistance during World War II, the Party earned a record number of votes in the elections immediately following the War. For instance, in the elections just after the liberation of France, the PCF emerged as the largest party in the country; in the November 1946 legislative election, the PCF came away with 28.6% of the vote (Bell & Criddle, 190-191). However, immediately following this electoral success came the first signs that the Party's rapid ascendency might not be a durable one.

Martelli argues that between 1947 and 1969, the PCF was face à la société qui bouge, faced with a mobile society. That is to say, societal norms and concerns were shifting. First, the economy exploded in the years following World War II, so much so that this epoch was named Les Trentes Glorieuses, the Glorious Thirty [years]. The enormous economic growth was fuelled by accelerating industrialization and entrepreneurship. Simultaneously, the government had undertaken a wide-reaching program of nationalizations. In effect, a middle ground had been reached between

³ Even in The People's Republic of China, where many have argued that communism only serves as a prop for corruption and power plays, and capitalism clearly drives the market. In an article entitled, Labor Politics under Three Stages of Chinese Capitalism, Ho-fung Hung clearly recognizes the disappearance of communism from the PRC when he discusses the degradation of workers rights since the reintegration of the economy with the global capitalist system (203).
capitalization and government economic planning. Up to 1973, this proved to be very successful, yet also notable was the 1973 Oil Crisis which stifled Les Trentes Glorieuses. Furthermore, the citizens of France were experiencing an economic and a cultural revolution, exemplified by the 1968 student and worker protests which paralyzed the country for several months, and almost brought down the Fifth Republic. Traditional values were being challenged, such as the paternalist nature of French society. French women, who had only enjoyed the right to vote since 1945, were fighting for equal treatment and the end of what was perceived by some to be a repressive system. Globally, French colonies were demanding independence and debates on the matter filled French newspapers. France would soon lose its status as an imperial power and the influence that it maintained as one. Would the PCF move with France and adapt to new changes?

This brings Martelli to his assertion that the PCF was not able to adapt to this transformation of the world as they knew it and have been in steady decline ever since. Furthermore, the Party lived in fear of the growing influence of right wing politics, particularly during the debate of the 1950s on the French-Algerian war, where immigration was becoming an increasingly contentious, contested and politicized question. Martelli argues that "[i]solé dans le monde politique français, incapable d'analyser ce qui est en train de passer dans la société, le PCF perçoit certes les risques de radicalisation à droite que nourrit le conflit algérien" (69). [(i)solated in the world of French politics and incapable of understanding what was currently taking place in
society, the PCF certainly perceived the risks of right-wing radicalism which were fuelled by the Algerian conflict.\textsuperscript{4}

As a result, they dropped the focus on their own politics and turned to a strategy of demonizing the opposition. After this compromise of methodology so to speak, Martelli notes a revival of sorts during the 1960s, drawing particular attention to the balancing act of the intellectual voices of the Party. The intellectuals of the PCF had to distance their political ideology from opportunism for which the Italian communists were criticized (there was a notably strong and comparable communist movement in Italy where the \textit{Partito Comunista Italiano} [PCI], Italian Communist Party was the most popular party in Italy after World War II, having gained a third of the vote throughout the 1970s; Italian communists have been relatively more successful as a political party than their French counterparts [see figure 3]). Simultaneously, the PCF had to vilify certain areas of \textit{le gauchisme}, leftism. They explained the flawed nature of Maoism, for instance, in order to separate the evidently destructive strains of communism from themselves.

The year that the Party could not survive was 1968. At first glance, one would not think that this year would be the Party's undoing. After all, it was in 1968 that zealous students across France spurred on a movement defined by leftist idealism. Additionally, student demonstration were accompanied by massive strikes across the country. The trade unions were highly involved in encouraging and organizing these protests. It would seem that the PCF would thrive amidst these activities, being after all the Party of the worker, yet the 1970s became a decade of disappointment and marked the beginning of what

\textsuperscript{4} All translations of citations used in this project are my own.
would become an irreversible decline for the PCF. Their popularity in the polls dropped with each consecutive year (see table 1). Accordingly Martelli refers to the period between 1978 and 2010 as *l'impossible sursaut*, the impossible effort.

In much the same spirit as Martelli, the two academics previously mentioned, Courtois and Lazar, collaborated in the undertaking of a history and analysis of the PCF, *Histoire du Parti communiste français*. As their study concludes in 1995 (fifteen years before that of Martelli), their definition of contemporary French society is temporally different. For this reason, while this text provides historical insights into the PCF's evolution and decline, I am hesitant to draw any conclusions from their relatively positive outlook on the role the PCF has to play in French society, particularly given the downward trajectory which the Party has continued to experience since their study was published.

Despite the more positive view which they present with regard to the PCF's historical role in French politics, even in 1995, Courtois and Lazar were under no illusions – the PCF was sinking into a decline from which there would be no return to the glory days of the war and its immediate aftermath. It would never again be a serious contender in the political race, but could, in their view, reemerge as an important political force in the future:

Le PCF dispose encore de quelques atouts. Bien que fortement en déclin sur le plan électoral et ayant perdu l'initiative stratégique, il pèse toujours au sein de la gauche française puisqu'il peut monnayer, et monnayer assez cher, son éventuel
soutien au Parti socialiste aux élections municipales, législatives ou présidentielles. Par ailleurs, il sauvegarde une assise municipale, même si elle se révèle très amoindrie. Il continue de bénéficier d'une influence dans certains secteurs de la société, en particulier dans le monde des ouvriers et des employés grâce à ses relais syndicaux. Il demeure une force protestataire capable de déclencher ou d'animer des mobilisations corporatives et sociales, ou même d'une autre nature, par exemple sur le thème de la paix (419).

The PCF still has some advantages at its disposal. Although substantially in decline as far as elections were concerned and having lost their strategic initiative, the PCF still weighs heavily on the heart of the French left since it can peddle its potential support to the Socialist Party in the municipal, legislative or presidential elections, and this can be quite costly. Furthermore, it retains a municipal base, even if it proves to be very diminished. It continues to benefit from its influence in certain sectors of society, particularly in the world of laborers and employees thanks to its union ties. It remains a dissident power, capable of releasing or invigorating corporate and social movements, or even of another nature, for example pacifist movements.

They also discuss the flaws of the Party, concluding in brief that their fall has resulted from a refusal to make the necessary changes to keep up with the "postindustrial" capitalist world. Courtois and Lazar have more or less abandoned the notion that the PCF
could still compete on equal footing with the main centrist French parties. While they argue that the party has a peripheral role to play, and can still influence politics, they can only do so in the form of a protest movement, or in coalition with the center left. This underscores the massive decline that the Party has experienced since the 1960s-1970s.

To further understand the PCF's decline and more broadly the key flaws of communism as an applied political model, Raymond Aron's book, *The Opium of the Intellectuals* provides an insightful study. In an introduction to this book, Harvard scholar, Harvey C. Mansfield, summarizes:

[Communism] fell because, though it was a regime, it had no way to understand itself as one. Its rule was judged by the standard of termination of its rule, a termination advanced into the present by the necessary impatience of its idea. Communism could not stand, yet could not avoid, comparison with its present reality. Its routine was not inspired by its dream but destroyed it. Its rulers had nothing to be proud of. They were forced to become intellectuals and either lie unconvincingly about the present or give up on it (xv, Aron).

Sudhir Hazareesingh's look at the Party is immediately understood as pessimistic with a glance at the title of his book, *Intellectuals and the French Communist Party: Disillusion and Decline*. Although Hazareesingh was writing many years before Martelli (1991 as opposed to 2010), he also sees the year 1978 as a key date in the PCF's decline. It was approximately at this time that the PS emerged as a political power and the PCF
tanked in the 1978 legislative elections. As such, he focuses his work on this turning point and its aftermath.

He also highlights the differences between the 1970s and the 1980s. It is clear from his argument that the personality of the Party, so to speak, drastically changed over the course of these decades. To perfectly illustrate the nature of this change one has only to look at the Party's twenty-fifth Congress in February 1985. The proceedings resulted in an official omission of the PCF's alliance with French intellectuals. Indeed, Hazareesingh notes that the figures from the artistic, scientific, and literary community were conspicuously missing from the 1985 Congress – they had simply refused to attend. This loss of the intellectuals, Hazareesingh will assert, was the beginning of the end for the Party. However, it is worth noting that Hazareesingh has a broad definition of 'intellectual.' He seems to include public figures such as actors and singers into this category as well as certain politicians. This makes it difficult to wholeheartedly accept his analysis – with such a broad definition he may only be describing the PCF's general loss of popularity.

Not only did the Party suffer the loss – albeit voluntarily – of their intellectual support, but the Soviet Communist Party became another critic. Their view of their French 'relation' is succinctly conveyed by a quote from a political commentator of *Izvestia* (a Russian newspaper conceived in 1917 to represent Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary Party views), "'The [French] Communists have neither a programme nor even a slogan which could appeal to wider popular masses. Their strategy and tactics are completely outdated in relation to the new conditions created by the *perestroika* of
modern capitalism' " (qtd. in Hazareesingh 2). On the other hand, the slow crumble of the Soviet Union itself was directly detrimental to the PCF's prestige and message. Moreover, the mere fact that the Party faced any kind of decline weakened the heart of its doctrine, that is, that the communist movement was only the beginning of an inevitable and growing world revolution.

A general consensus seems to place the turning point for the PCF at the close of the 1970s. Almost all commentators seem to identify this period as the beginning of an irreversible decline for the Party. Yet, even some time before this, the Moscow trials of 1936-38 deeply affected the reputation of the global communist movement (yet such events arguably snowballed across the years to the detriment of the Party). The Moscow trials were show trials instigated by Stalin's regime as part of the Great Purge (Stalin's attempt to literally wipe out all potential opposition to his reign). The trials' legitimacy was not necessarily clear at the time. This controversy led to a deep rift between Left-wing intellectuals in France (upon whom, Hazareesingh has established, the Party relied). The foggy line between "Stalinism" and communism opened the floodgates for debate and self-questioning. Such an ideological crisis seems to root itself in the divide between those moralists who saw Stalinism as an inevitable and unacceptable flaw in the communist doctrine and those who believed it to be a bump in the road, a necessary evil to be overcome and washed away in the end.

Tom Kemp has conducted extensive research on the history of Stalinism in France in a two-volume work entitled *Stalinism in France*. The first volume covers the first twenty years of the French Communist Party, that is from 1920 until the Party was made
illegal after the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact and the outbreak of World War II (although a significant amount of attention is also given the the pre-World War I evolution of the working class parties and the effect the war had on them). Kemp's work is informative as he identifies the Party's challenge of developing a revolutionary party in a country where capitalism ruled successfully and secondly, to describe the Party's evolution as a Stalinist party and the consequences this shift towards Stalinism had for the working class movement. As we will see, the PCF has been greatly challenged by their identity as a revolutionary party. Indeed, as my case studies will show the Party has shied away from the traditional communist "world revolution" rhetoric.

The PCF persisted in the face of many challenges and continued to obtain at least a small portion of the vote, as Kemp and others have observed. Their actual existence as part of French political culture cannot be contested, yet how significant is the role that they play? Richard Sacker wrote *A Radiant Future: The French Communist Party and Eastern Europe 1944-1956* to tackle the general underestimation of the Party's importance in France and also in East-West politics. Published in 1999, this text considers the aftermath of the 1989 collapse of the Soviet Union. The relationship between the PCF and the communist leadership in the East is therefore addressed, but also central to the work is the unique nature of French communist doctrine.

Beginning with the PCF's emergence as a political force with a future during World War II, Sacker traces their views on the establishment of the eight Popular Democracies in Central and Eastern Europe. He analyzes the factors contributing to the political transformation of Eastern Europe such as the "vacuum" created by the collapse
of fascism. Some of these factors seem to explain the rise of the PCF. An interesting point to note is the serious lack of available information about Eastern Europe at the time of the PCF’s rise to power. Under this intellectual handicap – which was combined with the literal absence of many specialists on Eastern Europe and economists within the PCF, due to the War – the Party was relatively quiet on the subject, though when it emerged, their stance was not surprisingly positive and supportive of the Eastern socialist countries. Sacker implies that had they known better, their perspective would have been different.

Subsequent chapters chronologically spell out the PCF’s position on certain movements in the European political landscape: the show trials in Eastern Europe, the uprisings in Czechoslovakia and East Germany, and the uprisings in Poland and Hungary. Said uprisings were against the socialist governments in the Eastern block and the PCF clearly stood on the side of the new governments (even to the point of supporting violent suppression of the riots, which in their view represented a hope for the fight against fascism and an opportunity for the spread of communism). The PCF complied with the Soviet Union’s recommendation to condemn the uprisings in Poland and Hungary, but to what extent did the Party answer to Moscow? Sacker confronts the close relationship between the PCF and Moscow in his analysis:

[T]he PCF line closely reflected that emanating from Moscow, not merely in terms of the actual reaction to the events in the Popular Democracies but also with respect to the arguments put forward to justify such a reaction. On no major issue
regarding the development of socialism in Eastern Europe did either the form or the content of the PCF analysis differ substantially from that of its Soviet counterpart (313).

In another study published in the early 1990s, The French Communist Party in the Fifth Republic, D.S. Bell and Byron Criddle firmly judge the Party to be "in essence a totalitarian party dedicated to the success of Soviet-type systems" (Preface). This book followed their previous research on the French Socialist Party. An introduction outlines the organization and ideology of the Party, then they split the meat of the book in two, first covering history, from the roots planted in 1920 through the "struggle to survive" in the early 1990s. Part II is centered upon the structure and context of the PCF’s function as a political entity and analyses of the Party via its relationships; relationships with the French labor unions, the USSR, the Socialists, and the public.

The final portion of the book presents a theme common among these works on the PCF: decline. Referring to a period of decline for the PCF in the 1970s, Bell and Criddle cite F.L. Wilson’s five sources for the decline of the PCF: "socio-economic change, change in political culture, change in political institutions, change in the terms of party competition, and the impact of party leaders" (217). The authors explain that within this list a hierarchy existed for Wilson. He placed the impact of leaders and changes in terms of competition at the top. Bell and Criddle concisely apply his logic to the French Communist case, but go further:

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Wilson's model of party change would therefore attribute decline mainly to Georges Marchais's leadership, and secondly to the bipolarizing system of competition, with institutional, cultural and socio-economic forces (in this case, presumably, the contraction and 'de-radicalization' of the working class) as more passive sources of decline. Such a ranking does not entirely convince. It is clear that socio-economic changes have reduced the role the Communist Party can play. […] The Communist Party, and its unions, are strongest in the areas and sectors which are in long-term decline all over Western Europe – heavy industry and small farming – and they are weak in the industries using new technology and in the growing sectors (218).

Although the authors do not unreservedly agree with Wilson's hierarchy, they do not diminish the role of any of these factors in the Party's decline. For instance, it is apparent that the Socialists were able to offer something that the Communists could not: a way of working within and not against the capitalist system which seemed to rule post-war society. This, along with inadequate leadership is discussed by Bell and Criddle.

As previously examined works place great emphasis on the Moscow connection, it is important to mention that Bell and Criddle also tied the deterioration of the PCF in part to its bond with Soviet communism and inability to move forward:
Orphaned by the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Party retained all the Leninist characteristics that had sustained it over seventy years and there was no reason to believe the Party would not preserve such characteristics in the short-term expectation of a collapse of French social democracy after Mitterrand (230).

I would like to mention a final work by Danièle Joly entitled *The French Communist Party and the Algerian War*. Although its title indicates a much more narrow topic, Joly has written a preface invaluable to any study of the PCF. The official party line is easily identifiable, Joly observes, as it is defined at every annual party congress. Yet, the trick comes when one tries to examine debate within the Party. Joly explains,

> [T]he PCF still preserved organisational principles dating back to its creation, inspired by Lenin's Party of a new type. According to this model, any debate must take place strictly inside the Party through the correct channels permitted by democratic centralism; this rules out factions and forbids the voicing of differences outside the Party. The official position, agreed upon by the highest echelons of the Party, its congress, is the only one to be known by the public and must be defended by all the Party members, even if they have or have had any reservations on it, or frankly disagreed (ix).

Joly also refers to the PCF's loyalty to Marx, Engels, and Lenin. Due to this fierce adherence to Marxist-Leninist doctrine, the Party's only option to adapt has been to
reinterpret existing discourse rather than draw up a brand new platform. This creates a considerable dependence on rhetoric; compared with other political entities, the more analysis and significance may be placed on word choice in Party texts and speech.

Joly's work is as much a study of the nature of the PCF as an assessment of the French communist stance on the Algerian War. She emphasizes the PCF's position on the issue of colonization as it was the centerpiece to all judgments made during the War. In the end, the Party surprisingly shifted from an anti-colonialist stance that pushed for Algerian independence to one favoring continued French rule in Algeria with compromise to some extent (41). Again, when contextualizing PCF ideology as part of their discourse on the Algerian War, Joly put forward a warning:

One essential characteristic of the PCF is that its policies derive from global theoretical analyses, combined with the 'scientific' study of specific situations and phenomena. This is what the PCF claims and it needs to be verified; as a result one must necessarily pay attention to the possible discrepancies between words and deeds, between reality and the Party's version of it. One finds that the scientific approach is frequently lacking. The Party can portray the reality it strives towards as though it had been attained already, or selects the facts that suit its preconceptions. However, the interaction and dynamism between its practice, its policies, its theory and ideology remain the most interesting element of research on the PCF (xiii).
The works which have been reviewed in this section reveal several themes to which I will attempt to remain attentive throughout my analysis of the current platform of the PCF. First, is the theme of decline. The PCF's popularity seems to have begun its decline in the early 1970s and most of the texts which I have reviewed above do not view the future of the Party in a positive light. These texts often discussed the PCF's inability to adapt as its primary weakness. As society was changing rapidly throughout the 1970s and onward, we may well be able to deduce the static nature of the Party's ideology as the cause its decline. Also, the preface of Joly's text, which highlights the importance of language when studying PCF publications, has led me to pay special attention to the terminology used in and the tone of these publications. Together these themes provide an interesting enigma: how does a political party maintain a passionate discourse when faced with increasingly diminished popularity each year.
4. The PCF and the European Economic Crisis

4.1 The Crisis

It would not be an exaggeration to judge recent years to have presented some of the most unique economic challenges Europe has yet seen. The unwelcome words "eurozone crisis" have become familiar to all those who simply open a newspaper. With an ideology based upon the financial oppression of one class by another, the PCF has had much to say on all economic affairs relating not only to the crisis, but its repercussions for the French economy. As will become apparent in the discussion which follows, the PCF continues to cite capitalism as the underlying root to Europe's economic problems. Indeed, the PCF's position on the eurozone crisis has become a central theme in the party's recent official pronouncements and will provide the basis for the first case study of this project.

The European sovereign-debt crisis is rooted in the 1992 signing of the Maastricht Treaty. This treaty created the European Union, and tied the member nations more closely together than they had ever been before both in terms of economic structures, and in terms of collective political decision-making. The Maastricht Treaty also set the groundwork for the introduction of a single European currency, the Euro, which would be
introduced in 1999. The simple act carried great weight; suddenly trade was completely liberated between member states, yet new deficit and debt restrictions were put in place. These restrictions were intended to mitigate possible crises and make the currency stronger. Each individual government's approach to economic policy had to be rethought and restructured, and all policy decisions had to be in line with each other – one could even say that they had to be made mutually to a certain degree. In hindsight, one might judge the new system to be a house of cards – each state relied on the others for stability, but pull one from the delicate creation and they all could come toppling down.

So, the EU has not yet collapsed and the euro has proven to be a stable and strong currency. It has, however, been faced with obstacles which would not have existed sans euro. As the world rushed into the twenty-first century, some members of the eurozone began to slip into the periphery of the deficit and debt limits set out in the Maastricht Treaty as the global economy also turned downward. Soon states were masking their struggles rather than publicly defaulting on their EU agreements. Perhaps they believed that short-term solutions would allow states to hold out just long enough for the global economy to swing upwards again. Alas, it did not.

Things started to bubble to the surface in Europe and in 2009 it was clear that several states faced grave economic predicaments. In Greece for instance, spending was through the roof in part due to spending commitments made prior to Maastricht. In his

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6 The currency was introduced into financial markets in 1999, and became a paper/coins currency in 2002.
7 It is worth noting here that it is difficult to judge whether the eurozone exacerbated or alleviated the European economic crisis – it may well be that without the euro the crisis could have been much worse.
blog, policy analyst Bob McTeer gives a concise account of exactly how the euro has created a unique quandary in Greece:

If Greece still had its own currency, it would depreciate substantially against other currencies and much of the necessary reduction in Greek real income would take place via that currency depreciation. Ultimately, the real income changes are comparable under the two systems, but the currency depreciation option does not require money wages and benefits to decline, where stickiness leads to unemployment. The decline in real income would be spread more equally among the population rather than be concentrated among the unemployed (McTeer).

Spain in particular was subject to a property bubble which led to bank bailouts. Europe is in much the same situation as this individual state: too much depends upon those indebted states' stability to allow collapse, therefore the leading and largest economies of the EU – principally France and Germany – must come to their aid. Mechanisms like le pacte budgétaire [the Fiscal Compact] (officially, le traité sur la stabilité, la coordination et le gouvernance [Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union]) were being debated and put into action. "Bailouts" and "austerity measures" became common terms in political discourse across Europe.

This Fiscal Compact, for instance, was an addition to the 1999 Growth and Stability Pact. It required ratifying members to balance their budgets, in principle, no
matter what it took. The basic idea behind these economic policies was to accept tough cuts now to allow the economy to heal and grow in the long term. Its proponents wished members to come to an agreement so that that EU could pursue a solution in a unified manner. Furthermore, in aiding states like Greece for example, other members gained leverage in the management of Greek economic policy. The Compact, agreed upon nearly a year ago by all eurozone states, went into action in January 2013. The idea that the entire EU should agree upon one budgetary policy was quite controversial considering the implications that such legislation might have for individual state sovereignty, yet many thought stability to be simply too important to oppose the reforms. Germany had pressured other states to adopt balanced budget legislation as early as 2010.

Nicolas Sarkozy, the former president of France, and his administration had with Germany advocated austerity measures. Not surprisingly, the communists in France did not feel optimistic about Sarkozy's policy decisions. In fact, the Party has adamantly opposed all major solutions considered by the major powers of Europe (principally France and Germany). The PCF essentially believes that resolutions, such as the Fiscal Compact, attack la souveraineté populaire, popular sovereignty. The principal idea behind popular sovereignty is that a government is only legitimate when its people consent to its governance. The PCF asserts that the more power given to the overarching institution that is the EU, the less power remains in the hands of each consenting population. An article found on PCF.fr conveys this idea with its inflammatory language:

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8 A general budget deficit of less than 3.0% of gross domestic product is considered a balanced budget.
Il installe un fédéralisme autoritaire niant la souveraineté populaire. Il place l'économie en pilotage automatique, soumise à des normes destinées à rassurer des marchés financiers dont la puissance n'est pas remise en cause. Nous l'acceptons pas (Non à l'austérité permanente. Refusons le Pacte budgétaire, ouvrons le débat en Europe!).

The Fiscal Compact initiates an authoritarian federalism which harms popular sovereignty. It places the economy in autopilot, binding it to standards intended to place checks on the financial markets, whose power goes nevertheless unchallenged. We will not accept it.

The title, translated as No to Indefinite Austerity. Let us refuse the Fiscal Compact, let us open debate in Europe! is quite provocative. It implies that the balanced budget laws induced by the Fiscal Compact will not work as they theoretically should. Austerity measures, again, are tough economic conditions put in place by government in order to reduce deficit and allow an economy to return to normal in the long-term. The PCF is suggesting that although the proponents of the Fiscal Compact champion this logic, the proposed agreement only launches never-ending severe economic policies. In the same article, the Compact was referred to as économiquement stupide economically stupid. Another aspect that is also striking about this inflammatory discourse is that numerous center-right parties across Europe, notably the UK’s Conservative Party, have
characterized the Fiscal Compact as constituting "authoritarian federalism," using very similar terms as those employed by the PCF.

Moreover, the PCF considers such plans and policies to be the concoctions of a self-interested, hegemonic block of powers who make decisions not for the good of the people, but for capital gain. They do not separate the great political powers of Europe – France and Germany – from the giants of the market. Another article featured on PCF.fr, *Non au traité d'austérité* [No to the Austerity Compact] underlines the communists' refusal to comply to society as it is – run by capitalists. It says, "Nous refusons de nous plier à la confiscation de la souveraineté populaire par une classe financière qui possède tout, les banques, les marchés financiers, les multinationales, et qui a déclaré la guerre aux démocraties et aux peuples" [We refuse to submit to the confiscation of popular sovereignty by a business class that owns everything, the banks, the financial markets, the multinational corporations and who have declared war on all democracies and peoples].

This is characteristic of communist insurrection. They clearly refuse to participate in a system that goes against their ideals. They refuse to give in to the market! Yet how does such a refusal initiate any sort of change? If the PCF held much sway in *l'Assemblée nationale* (roughly equivalent to the United States Congress), then it would certainly have the potential to halt such resolutions as the Fiscal Compact. As the Party now receives less than 5% of the vote in French elections⁹ this could not be further from the truth. It is

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⁹ This statistic was taken from the website, About-france.com. The 2012 article, *Political Parties in France with a comparison to political parties in Britain and in the USA*, by Andrew Rossiter was recommended by the United States Library of Congress and a basic overview in English of political parties in France.
Quite interesting to consider the language choices of the PCF when we know that they will in the end be forced to allow the passage of the Fiscal Compact.

Perhaps with their own impotency in mind, it seems that they aim to mobilize the public rather than work through democratic institutions, like the Assemblée. Most publications end with a call for open debate, a referendum, or the date and place of a protest. The article discussed above, Non à l'austérité permanente… ends as follows:

"[N]ous organiserons ensemble une série de débats publics dans toute la France; nous nous adresserons et inviterons les citoyens à s'adresser à chaque député et sénateur de la majorité parlementaire, et nous organiserons des manifestations dont une grande manifestation unitaire à Paris le dimanche 30 septembre." [Together, we are organizing a series of public debates all over France; we will address, and we invite French citizens to address each legislator and senator of the parliamentary majority, and we are organizing protests one of which is an immense, collaborative demonstration to take place in Paris, Sunday, September 30th.]

One must credit this particular citation for its recognition of political reality, that the PCF does not in fact possess leverage in the government. It calls for the citizens of France to write to the majority parties. This, they know, is their only chance of being effective.

The article, Non au traité d'austérité, ends in a similar fashion: "Nous proposons un grand débat public et contradictoire sur la nature même du traité budgétaire européen, de la règle d'or, des régressions démocratiques contre les Etats et les parlements. […] Ce processus démocratique doit être conclu par un référendum." [We are proposing a great,
public and open debate on the very nature of the European Fiscal Compact, on the golden rule, on democratic degeneration of states and parliaments. (...) This process should be concluded by a referendum.] A referendum in France is a procedure in which all citizens are asked to vote directly on a specific issue. Since the inception of the Fifth Republic in 1958, only nine referendums have been held; one referendum concerned the adoption of the single European currency, the euro.

Within France itself, the past year has been one of transition, as most presidential election years are. Sarkozy left his office to the newly elected François Hollande, of the French Socialist Party. Although this has signaled a shift to the left, Hollande has continued the austerity measures taken by the departing administration, and the PCF has made its discontent known. Furthermore, the administration under Hollande aims to bring the public deficit to zero by 2017, an objective established by Sarkozy. On the surface, this might appear an admirable and reasonable goal for any state, especially considering the global recession rooted in the massive debt of various states. Few would argue that debt is not dangerous.

The PCF is decidedly against the radical measures proposed by the French administration. In essence, the economists of the PCF believe that such a plan would require massive cuts to public spending, ultimately resulting in the destruction of social programs. The PCF puts out a "blog" of sorts as part of its website entitled, *Economie et Politique*. This corner of their site furnishes readers with a wealth of articles in which the official position of the Party is explicitly conveyed. Again, the Party communicates only its official positions in its publications. Debates within the Party are not publicized and
this makes for an at once simple and complex study. This particular blog aims to develop and disseminate a Marxist view of contemporary politics and policy:

Comprendre la réalité dans toutes ses dimensions et élaborer des solutions alternatives aux politiques d’accompagnement du capital au service des luttes sociales et politiques: Tel est le choix d’Economie et Politique. Revue marxiste, elle contribue depuis plus de 50 ans au développement de la théorie marxiste, en confrontation avec les réalités nouvelles (Qui Sommes-Nous?).

To understand reality in all of its dimensions and develop alternatives to the policies for supporting funds in the service of social and political struggles: Such is the choice of Economy and Politics. As a Marxist journal, it has contributed to the development of Marxist theory in confronting new realities.

A February 27, 2013 article found on this blog, Harmonisation fiscale européenne: leurre ou vrai enjeu? discusses the issue of spending cuts and public deficit. Its author reminds the readership that public services have already been the victim of serious budgetary troubles, and warns that the administration’s plan to erase the public deficit will only force these social programs and institutions into a deeper financial quagmire. With the cuts that they would surely face, these programs would find it impossible to carry out their respective functions. An air of mistrust seems to weave itself

10 Often on this website, author names are not given.
throughout the article as the author describes the "true" reason for the administration's resolutions:

Les ménages vont quant à eux connaître une nouvelle dégradation de leurs conditions de vie. L’enjeu principal de toute cette agitation médiatique pourrait donc bien se situer à ce niveau. Il s’agit de faire diversion pour que le peuple s’aperçoive le plus tard possible que le choc d’austérité conduit sous Sarkozy et poursuivi par Hollande est la vraie cause d’une croissance atone (croissance 0 en 2012 et vraisemblablement en 2013) et de l’abyssal déficit public qui minent toute la société.

As for households, they are going to witness a new degradation of their standards of living. It could well be therefore that the main issue in all this mediatized unrest situates itself at this level. It is all about creating a diversion so that the people perceive only at the last possible moment that the economic shock of austerity measures precipitated under Sarkozy's administration and the same continued by Hollande is the true culprit of stagnant growth (0 growth in 2012 and seemingly in 2013) and of the abysmal public deficit that is wearing down all parts of society.

The Party clearly believes the austerity measures taken to solve the sovereign debt crisis in Europe were at no time the right decision and continue to plague the continent. On a
grander scale, the crisis is emblematic of the destruction caused by capitalism since the "capitalists" were certainly behind these initiatives:

Loin de permettre une sortie de crise, cet accord est une soumission aggravée aux logiques financières qui conduisent au chaos. "La règle d'or," qui grave dans le marbre les critères du pacte de stabilité et de croissance, prévoit des sanctions automatiques et des obligations pour les États de négocier des plans d'austérité avec l'UE. Les chefs d'États s'obstinent dans des choix politiques qui tuent la croissance et jettent les peuples dans la misère et le désarroi. Ce traité, c'est le débarquement assuré de la "Troïka,"\(^{11}\) le pillage des biens communs et la casse des droits sociaux, dans tous les pays de l'Union (Sommet européen: l'accord Merkozy ne doit pas être ratifié!).

Far from permitting an escape from crisis, this compact is a capitulation to the capitalist logic that drives society into chaos. "The golden rule," that is carving the criteria of the Fiscal Compact and economic growth into marble, envisages automatic sanctions and an obligation for states to negotiate austerity plans with the EU. The heads of state continue to make political choices that eliminate growth and throw all peoples into misery and helplessness. This compact is the

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\(^{11}\) Troïka were trials held during the Soviet Union's history in which the accused were sentenced without a hearing as three state official would be assigned the case and given absolute power to judge as they saw fit. Stalin used these trials as an means of mass terror in the 1930s. Many of these convicts were exonerate after Stalin's death (Soviet Union Pardons for Troika Cons).
sure disembarkation of the Troika trials, the pillage of common goods and
damage of social rights in all countries of the [European] Union.

The règle d'or, golden rule to which the author of this PCF article makes
reference is the plan drawn up by Sarkozy's administration to definitively balance the
budget and moreover, write progressive provisions into the French Constitution itself to
prevent further imbalance. These would include debt ceilings to be set annually. The PCF
is certainly right to question such a resolution. A priori, setting limits to borrowing and
spending in face of a financial crisis seems to be a logical course of action due to the
undeniable obligation of the state to balance the budget. Yet, I would argue that in
practice such a set of laws does not hold much potential. An annually set ceiling would
only give the government a chance to readjust numbers to whatever shortcomings for
which they may have been responsible over the year. The government could therefore
easily put on a front that goals have been met and that it has been mindful of its
commitment to the people.

The Party's argument, however, rings with fear of – again – austerity measures.
The Party seems to place all debate in a set of black and white lenses. These have been
pinpointed as the enemy of the citizens' wellbeing; no matter the economic issue being
discussed, the Party will return to what they consider to be the invention of capitalism.

In the above quote, the règle d'or is dangerous in that it permanently sets limits to
spending that should be considered essential and a given. This set of laws would
automatically set cuts to public spending in order to fall under the previously set debt
ceiling. The PCF is absolutely against any assault on social programs for everyone should receive equal and adequate care/benefits. I have to say however, that the règle d'or sounds a lot like it follows the same logic as a five-year-plan, the infamous Soviet economic strategy to set and meet production goals. The goals are in the end impossible to meet, but the state will pursue any means to push towards them and accomplish at least the semblance that they have been met.

Leaders of Europe and the IMF have demanded from the Greek government – which is unelected and illegitimate – a new austerity plan as a stipulation of releasing aid from the EU. This aid, however, is not destined to the social development for which Greece has such a great need, but to guarantee the reimbursement of the Greek national debt to the banks. Those in France, Nicolas Sarkozy leading the way, who have applied pressure so that these disgraceful
[austerity] measures are adopted – and furthermore who are imposing the same measures on the French, shame us.

4.2 The Case Against Capitalism

As has become apparent throughout the preceding section, the crux of the PCF's position on the European debt crisis is that it is at root an inevitable repercussion of a flawed financial system which itself is predicated on capitalist corruption and exploitation. *Spécial Formation: Capitalisme et crise systématique*, a piece of literature – like many – found within the cyber reaches of *Economie et Politique*, gives a comprehensive account of the Party's view of capitalism which is directly relevant to our understanding of the PCF's analysis of the ongoing crisis. Its author, Yves Dimicoli, defines the system as much as he expounds upon its consequences. He starts by quickly debunking any impression that capitalism has been beneficial to society by bringing about a technological revolution. That is, one cannot appreciate the industrial advances for all of the misery that they have caused: "Mais avec le chômage énorme, la précarité intense jusqu'aux "emplois pauvres," les générations nouvelles vivent plus mal que celle de leurs parents et les acquis conquis par ceux-ci sont mis en cause." [However due to massive unemployment, extreme instability, and "low-income jobs," successive generations are living worse than their parents and their parents' social and economic advances are at risk.]
However, he then must fit his critique of capitalism into the contemporary context. I might point out that the great communist texts were written in the midst of the Industrial Revolution (Karl Marx's *The Communist Manifesto* being the exemplary example). The most momentous period of growth in European history came notoriously with grievous consequences. Thousands of the working class lived in deplorable conditions. It was therefore a simple matter of deductive argumentation to point to capitalism as the culprit for widespread misery and oppression.

Since the Industrial Revolution, the rise of labor unions was largely responsible for new legislation across the continent, which protected the working class from exploitation. It may then be easily comprehensible that communist parties allied themselves (and shared many members) with the unions. Yet today, as stated, many of the problems caused by the rise of an elite, powerful bourgeoisie during the Industrial Revolution have been addressed by the existence of labor unions and not necessarily by communism itself. Moreover, the PCF may have a difficult time rallying against capitalism when the Industrial Revolution did not self-destruct as Marx had predicted. In fact, it has given rise to the success and dominance of Western societies.

It seems that communism requires an enemy however, rooted in its very foundation is class struggle. Dimicoli argues that the Industrial Revolution has morphed into the *révolution informationnelle* the "technological revolution". It is via the technological revolution that present-day capitalists manipulate the market. The third section of his work is entitled, *Capitalisme financier, exacerbation de la crise systématique* [Financial Capitalism, the Methodical Exacerbation of the Crisis]. One of
its subsections is entitled *Technologies informationnelles et domination du marché financier* [Computer Technologies and the Domination of the Financial Market].

These titles alone can be discussed for the solid ideological claims they make. First, the phrase "exacerbation systematique" suggests that the worsening of the crisis is inherently built into the nature of the capitalist system. That is, capitalism inherently entails a vicious cycle of continuously aiming to expand profit margins – once one goal is met, another must be made. In fact, Dimicoli demonstrates this rationale with a diagram (see figure 1). This diagram contends that to maintain itself the capitalist system must follow the trajectory of funds, purchase of capital with funds, sale of product at a higher price to allow a profit, achievement of profit (attainment of funds), then back to funds and the purchase of capital but to a greater extent.

The subsection *Technologies informationnelles et domination du marché financier* clearly implies that the fight for domination of the market involves contestation for higher, greater, technological resources (just as the Industrial Revolution was fueled by increasingly efficient methods of production to the detriment of the worker – first and foremost this meant longer hours and lower wages).

Dimicoli explains that the capitalist response to the financial crisis is to pursue progressively sophisticated technologies. He states that "[c]ette introduction de plus en plus massive des hautes technologies transforme profondément la façon de produire des richesses" [(t)his increasingly massive introduction of greater technology is profoundly transforming the methods of producing wealth]. First, enterprises can produce more and more while spending less and less. Facing the costs of research and development, these
enterprises have found that they can ultimately increase profits by sharing technology among themselves. This decreases the risk that their research will be all for naught. In effect, oligopolies are constructed among groups of capitalists and the process leads to escalated unemployment:

Les groupes capitalistes vont chercher à se constituer des réseaux mondiaux de domination (oligopoles) au sein desquelles ils pourront partager ces coûts, de manière monopoliste, mais pour détruire les rivaux! […] Le recours de plus en plus massif aux hautes technologies, très économiques en temps de travail, est poussé pour accroître la rentabilité des capitaux, le rendement des actions. Cela fait de plus en plus de chômage.

Capitalist groups are going to look to establish for themselves global domination networks (oligopolies) at the heart of which they will be able to share costs, in a monopolistic fashion, in order to destroy rivals! […] The increasingly greater recourse to high technology, which is highly low-cost in terms of working time, is being pushed in order to grow profitability of capital and the yield of shares. This leads to more and more unemployment.

Apart from the technological revolution, the banks and distribution of loans ultimately have a direct, negative effect on workers' salaries. Dimicoli claims that under capitalist conditions borrowing has become first, easier to obtain for purely financial
operations and second, "de plus en plus anti-emploi, anti-formation, anti-croissance réelle" [more and more anti-employment, anti-education, anti-growth]. He points to this as the reason for the explosion of debt among those financial and speculative operations. They are costly investments without the security of actual material capital. To cushion the blow of these enormous debt crises the capitalist will incessantly cut overall costs by cutting wages:

Le capitaliste, pour rembourser la dette et ses intérêts, va faire continuellement pression sur le coût du travail. Le capitalisme aujourd'hui c'est le capitalisme financier, car prédomine le marché financier qui asservit le crédit des banques, la monnaie aux opérations et placements financiers. Le capitalisme a cherché à faire reculer ce système au profit des marchés financiers: (inflation des années 1970).

The capitalist, in order to repay his debt and interests, is going to continually apply downward pressure on the cost of labor. Capitalism today is financial capitalism, because the predominating financial market enslaves the banks' loans and currency to its operations and monetary allocations. Capitalism has looked to push this system backwards to the benefit of the financial markets: (inflation of the 1970s).

Worked into this section is the fundamental communist idea that the production of society belongs in equal portions to each of its members. The selectivity of banks in the
loan process goes against this idea. Dimicoli declares that "[a]rgent des banques: c’est argent de la société. Ce n'est ni l'argent des banquiers, ni l'argent des actionnaires" [(t)he banks' money: it is society's money. It is neither the money of bankers, nor the money of stockholders]. Dimicoli's discussion of the danger of technological advance, rings with Marx's reflections on the danger of the "machine." In The Communist Manifesto, Marx stated that "Not only are [laborers] slaves of the bourgeois class and of the bourgeois State; they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the overseer and, above all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself. The more openly this despotism proclaims gain to be its end and aim, the more petty, the more hateful and the more embittering it is" (14). Also notable in this citation and throughout the entire work is its communist terminology, significantly the grouping together then demonization of certain groups (bankers, investors, stockholders, and of course as a whole, capitalists).

4.3 Conclusion

This urgent and militant tone is never missing from the Party's publications, as the citations in this section have demonstrated. It permeates protest flyers, articles, and discussions at the Party's annual congresses. Indeed, this is one major theme that can be pulled from this section: the militant tone of the PCF is a notable aspect of its discourse. Three other points may summarize the conclusions I have drawn from my research on the PCF's stance on ideal economic policy.
First and foremost, the PCF places itself firmly against the resolutions of prevailing governments and instead favors… what? In fact, it is difficult to say what system the PCF would advocate. Of course, one might point out, it would propose a society in which all property and resources were publicly owned, then distributed equally. Yet, it is worth noting that throughout the process of reading articles on PCF.fr – articles that had been written over the course of the last year or so – I observed extensive critiques of the Fiscal Compact, austerity measures and the règle d'or but little to no discussion regarding viable alternatives or concrete solutions is provided. For instance, one of the first articles that I discussed was an article transmitted on PCF.fr Non à l'austérité permanente. Refusons le Pacte budgétaire, ouvrons le débat en Europe! In this article, the PCF cites the Fiscal Compact as ruinous for popular sovereignty in France, however, it offers no alternative solution. Similarly, in the next article discussed, Non au traité d'austérité, austerity measures are denounced as ultimately detrimental to the financial stability and general wellbeing of the French people. In no way does the PCF explain what route Europe should take instead and why.

Tied to the idea that the PCF is ready to critique emerging solutions to the economic crisis, but does not propose its own solutions is the next theme found in this section. In accordance with tradition and Marxist ideology, the Party rejects capitalism in every way except it does not demand revolution in the same way the fathers of communism did (Marx or Friedrich Engels, for instance). This is an interesting shift considering the integral part Marx and his contemporaries' texts play in communist
ideology. Joly, an author previously discussed, expounds the importance of Marxist theorists:

The Party rarely disputes Marx, Engels and Lenin's authority; on the contrary, they are paid due respect. If the PCF wants to justify a policy, it quotes its 'classics'; all the more so as its position differs from whatever happens to be the orthodox 'Marxist-Leninist' view at the time. In such cases, reference to Lenin or Marx serves as a legitimisation of the PCF's policy; their name suffices as a guarantee even if the meaning of what they said has first been reinterpreted by the Party (xi).

Yet the call for revolution seems to have diminished since the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the decline of the PCF's popularity began. It appears that just after World War II conditions seemed ideal for a revolution. The world had been shaken in a matter of years and because of the immense delusion caused by fascism, entire populations found themselves introspectively contemplating their homeland's political ideologies. It was at this point that the PCF peaked in popularity. They seemed to hold on to hope through the 1960s and into the 1970s, encouraging students and workers to protest the political regime they lived under. Yet when the Soviet Union ceased to be, in 1991, the PCF essentially lost a massive component of any potential global revolution. In the articles examined in this section, the PCF advocates the demolition of capitalism, but does not call for the sort of worldwide, violent revolution that Marx described. In fact,
violent means to the end of crushing the dominance of western capitalism are at no time advanced by the PCF.

In the next section, these economic themes will work their way into discourse on global issues. This is consistent with the idea that the PCF was founded on Marxism, an economic worldview.
5. The PCF's Relationship with its Third World Comrades

5.1 The PCF's Condemnatory Discourse On Military Intervention

My goal in this section is to analyze the current ideological trends that guide the PCF's positions on issues of foreign policy in comparison with their past positions. In doing so I aim to evaluate whether or not the Party has betrayed the pillars that form its foundation. If they have indeed reconstructed their view of the world, can they rightfully continue to call themselves communists? Specifically, the topic which will frame this second case study, is the French military intervention in Mali. I have chosen to elaborate on and analyze the PCF's position on this issue for several reasons. First, this is one of the most discussed foreign policy issues on PCF.fr. Second, France's involvement in Mali appears to be relatively more extreme than its involvement with other African conflicts since French ground forces have been employed in Mali. Finally, Mali was once a French colony and the PCF has historically seen colonialism as the oppression of the poor, struggling Third World by the rich, Western, industrial First World.

I raise this issue – which plays an enormous part of this study as a whole – in the section on foreign policy because the nature of communism itself has already laid out a clear-cut analysis of world affairs, how they should be perceived and where they are going. That is, Marx spoke of an inevitable world revolution. This would be entirely
based upon and sparked by class-relations. To briefly summarize, there exist two classes which will be increasingly at odds, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The bourgeoisie is the ruling class who gains power through operation and control of the market and the means of production. The proletariat is the working class, oppressed by the bourgeoisie. Marxist theory claims that one day the oppression will become so great that the proletariat will become conscious of its misery and also of its right to insurrection. This will eventually culminate in a world revolution, which in turn will end in the overthrow of the ruling class and a socialist system would supplant capitalism. The socialist system was only considered by Marx to be the transition to communism as the ultimate goal would be the a stateless society in which all members received equal recompense for each one's work, also to be divided equally.

Today's global society can be easily fit into a Marxist interpretation. The "Third World" would fall into the proletariat, the oppressed workers category while the "First World" states – highly industrialized, capitalist states – would be considered the bourgeoisie. Therefore, one would expect the PCF to side with the Third World and indeed much of the commentary found on PCF.fr blames France and other western powers for the violence erupting in much of the Third World.

The Third World also seems to express solidarity with the PCF. Professor Issa N'Diaye of Mali called upon the Party as well as le Front de Gauche during the 36th

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12 It may be worth noting that the French translation of "Third World," tiers monde was first used in the 1950s to distinguish the developing countries from the capitalist and communist blocs ("Third World," The New Oxford American Dictionary).

13 Le Front de gauche, the Left Front is an electoral coalition formed between the PCF and the Parti de Gauche, the Left Party. Since the 2012 electoral campaigns it has included several other "far left" parties (About-france.com).
Annual Congress of the PCF. Diaye said that the French communists and furthermore the people of France have always been friends of Mali. He then described the situation in Mali very much in concordance with communist ideology. His interpretation placed occidental power in the seat of blame. This would include France, but more interestingly he also cited the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank as responsible for the violence. This violence, he explained, results from *politiques prédatrices*, predatory politics and that the wars, such as the one raging in northern Mali have been *imposed* on the populations by these institutions.

Mali, in West Africa is exemplary of Third World states facing eruptions of violence. It is a component of the waves of unrest across Africa, which have been designated the "Arab Spring." No discussion of the Arab Spring could remain simple as this term encompasses numerous complex relationships between various rebel forces and their respective enemies, the regimes already in place. As many of these states, Mali among them, were former French colonies, a post-colonial analysis of the situation can be readily applied. I will not attempt to delineate France's relationship with these states as a former imperial power nor will I discuss France's measure of responsibility for the violence occurring in West and North Africa. For my purposes, I will only discuss the PCF's assessment of the situation specific to Mali (also in an effort to avoid an overly-complex discussion).

The Malian Empire is currently under attack by mujahideen and Tuareg forces (a nomadic people of north Mali) who undoubtedly seek to dominate its historically lucrative trade routes and natural resources (principally, uranium). Rebellion began as
early as the 1960s when the Tuaregs demonstrated against perceived discrimination in regard to cultural and land rights. They were violently suppressed and unrest has since installed itself within Malian borders. Jumping to recent years, violence was further fuelled after a supply of arms flooded the region following the 2011 conflict in Libya. "Islamists" or mujahideen joined the Tuaregs, took control of North Mali in 2012 and subsequently instituted a harsh form of Islamic law. At that point, the country requested France's aid. France responded by conducting air strikes to halt the rebel advance. In early 2013, French troops intervened and "hand to hand" fighting commenced in Diabaly, a city near the rebel front. Air strikes have since continued (Allen and Oliver).

Commenting on this French intervention in Mali, Diaye explained that the Malian people did not wish to allow France's military involvement, however faced with the threat of complete annihilation by the mujahideen, they had little other choice. The intervention, Diaye said, is unfortunately a formulated scheme to obtain natural resources, like oil, and reinforces destructive and corrupt political authorities:

L’intervention au Nord Mali ne vise pas seulement la sécurisation des approvisionnements énergétiques et autres des puissances occidentales, notamment de la France. Du même coup, elle remet en selle et réconforte un régime, des institutions, des hommes et des femmes, un système politique et une démocratie totalement corrompus et impopulaires et qui ont une responsabilité lourde dans le désastre dont aujourd’hui notre peuple est victime. L’insistance avec laquelle le recours aux élections dans les délais les plus rapides est exigé par
les occidentaux, témoigne beaucoup plus de leur impatience à donner un vernis de légitimité à des élites prédatrices à leur solde (N’Diaye).

The intervention in North Mali does not only aim for the securing of energy resources and other resources from Western powers, notably from France. At the same time, the intervention put back in the saddle and encourages a regime, institutions, men and women, a political system and a democracy all of which are completely corrupt and unpopular and which bear a heavy responsibility in the disaster of which today our people are victims. The insistence with which the recourse to election in the greatest haste is demanded by Westerners, bears much witness to their impatience in glazing a veil of legitimacy over the predatory elites to their own credit.

It seems to be Diaye's hope that he will find a more trustworthy ally in the PCF. He finishes his appeal to the 36th Congress with a statement that again insists on the alliance that has long existed between the Malian people and their "comrades" in France and the rest of the world. These comrades have "restées constantes et ne se mesurent point en nombre de barils de pétrole et de tonnes d’uranium extraits ou à extraire du sous sol malien" [remained constant and their friendship is not measured in tons of uranium extracted or to extract from beneath Malian soil] (N'Diaye).
How has the PCF itself responded to the violence in Mali? It has expressed disapproval of the violence occurring between rebel and French/Malian forces. In an article entitled *C'est le Mali qu'il faut reconstruire*, it released the following statement:

Le PCF exprime sa grande inquiétude devant la dégradation de la situation au Mali, la reprise de la confrontation militaire, l'offensive des groupes armés djihadistes. […] C'est le Mali qu'il faut reconstruire : son armée, ses institutions, sa souveraineté, et les conditions politiques, économiques et sociales de son développement. C'est en agissant dans cette voie que ce pays ami pourra surmonter la crise extrêmement grave qu'il traverse, reconquérir les territoires du Nord aujourd'hui aux mains de groupes armés rebelles aux pratiques inhumaines - et souvent liés aux réseaux du crime organisé - que le PCF condamne.

The PCF expresses its immense concern regarding the degradation of the situation in Mali, the resumption of military confrontation, the assault of armed jihadist groups. […] It is Mali that must be reconstructed: its army, institutions, sovereignty, and the political, economic and social conditions favorable to its development. It is acting in this way that this ally will be able to overcome the extremely grave crisis, cross and reconquer northern territories that today are in the hands of armed rebel groups and inhumane practices – and often connected with networks of organized crime – that the PCF condemns.
This statement portrays the vague nature with which the PCF often seems to respond to global and other issues. In another article found on PCF.fr, Mali: "L'intervention militaire française comporte de grands risques de guerre," the Party is somewhat less vague in their assessment of the situation in Mali: they advocate the intervention of the United Nations rather than the French military. They may have judged UN intervention to be a less violent approach, and to the PCF's credit they are consistent in their anti-intervention discourse: "Le PCF exprime une nouvelle fois son inquiétude devant la nouvelle et grave situation créée par la reprise de la confrontation armée au Mali. L'intervention militaire française comporte de grands risques de guerre et d'enlisement sans véritable solution durable pour le peuple malien et pour la reconstruction du pays" (L'intervention militaire française comporte de grands risques de guerre). [The PCF would once again express its concern at the prospect of the new and serious situation created by the reintroduction of armed intervention in Mali. The French military intervention carries great risks of veritable war and of definitively losing a viable and long-lasting solution for the Malian people and for the reconstruction of their country.] I would submit, however, that the PCF's support of the UN contradicts its professed worldview. If the UN should decide to intervene in Mali, all members of the Security Council would have to agree to this. Since the Security Council members are the United States (traditionally the ultimate enemy of communist ideology), China, Russia, the United Kingdom, and France, it would seem that the Security Council's decision-
making power represents the absolute epitome of hegemonic dominance of capitalist powers. At any rate, this is the only solution that the PCF has put forward.

5.2 Conclusion

Several points emerge from this discussion of the PCF's position on the French military intervention in Mali. First, it is clear that the PCF still expresses solidarity with Third World countries, and this sympathetic perspective stems from the communist worldview based on polarization of the rich and the poor. Moreover, the Third World itself seems to feel some solidarity with the communists, as Diaye expressed in his entreaty to the PCF. If the poor populations of the Third World are the global proletariat, this association is consistent with the historic trend in which the working classes (and workers' unions) have been the main source of the PCF's support.

The relationship leads to the oppression of the poor Third World by the rich First World. The reason for this tyrannical nature of the rich, industrialized countries which make up the First World is the very nature of capitalism. The vicious cycle which was discussed in the first case study has, on a global scale, ignited violence and chaos: "Le monde fou que nous avons sous les yeux est le résultat de la domination accrue du capital financier sur le monde, le produit monstrueux de deux décennies de politiques néolibérales qui ont jeté les germes d’un grave recul de civilisation" (L'Humain d'abord). [The demented world before us is the result of the accumulated damage of capitalist
domination, the monstrous product of two decades of neoliberal politics which planted the seeds of a serious decline of civilization.]

The examination of the Party's assessment of the Mali situation was further developed by the articles which presented the PCF's official position on the French military intervention. In many ways these pronouncements betrayed a conflictual discourse. On one hand, the PCF sympathizes with Mali, because they believe Mali to be the victim of an oppressive world order. On the other hand, the PCF officially favors the intervention of an organization which an objective analysis would judge to be the embodiment of First World domination, the UN. Furthermore, the pacifist objection to French intervention in Mali for fear that it would produce war goes against a tradition of violent discourse which has formerly been integrated into communist texts. For instance, Marx himself declared in *The Communist Manifesto* that the communists' "ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions" (41). The PCF was also extremely active as part of the French Resistance during World War II which likely led to their most successful election year, 1945. Perhaps the PCF has only objected to French military intervention in Mali in order to oppose the French state itself. This is quite a "political" approach for a Party whose identity resides in an established ideology.
Conclusion

This research project set out to examine the contemporary, political platform of the PCF and did so through the lens of two case studies, the first examining the European debt crisis, and the second examining France's intervention in Mali. It was important to first discuss the history of the Party, especially from 1945 onwards. This year along with the 1970s were key periods in the history of the rise and fall of the PCF. In 1945, the PCF obtained its record high in votes, yet by the elections of 1971 the approval rating of the PCF had dropped drastically. Then, by 1978, the PCF had faced even more devastating electoral failure. To sum up the importance of these periods, I again refer to the work of Bell and Criddle. Their analysis of the PCF's losses refer to the challenges posed by the reduction of the manual working class and the "peasantry," as well as the increasing wealth of society in general. These changes in society have proven to be progressive, in that the decline of these demographics and the increase in wealth have moved steadily in an upward trajectory since the end of World War II. Bell and Criddle note that the PCF seems aware of the weakness caused by these trends and have even conceded to their inadequacy in responding to a shifting French society since 1956 (218).

Bell and Criddle also discuss the comments of Tony Judt author of the text, *Marxism and the French Left* (1986),
"who cites the Party's attachments to the most archaic parts of France as one of its two enduring weaknesses (the other being its 'Stalinist culture'). Judt echoing Goguel, notes that, 'within any given department, the PCF strength in cantons of industrial decay and demographic decline is unmistakable.' Some of the Party's redoubts were and still are, in rural areas (especially around the Massif central) but its decline in the prosperous Paris region has been more rapid and more significant. The Party's careful cultivation of its working-class image is out of tune with contemporary France. An aspect of the Party's archaism is its unwillingness to adapt its ideological appeal" (218-219).

After conducting my examination of the PCF's current political platform, the preceding citation seems to encapsulate the deficiencies of the Party today. Furthermore, it is interesting that these comments were made when their book was published in 1994 – it would follow that very little has changed.

This conclusion is further illustrated and wholly summarized by a series of political cartoons published as part of the official presidential campaign of the Front de Gauche for the 2012 election. These nicely outline many of the findings of this project. One of them is subtitled, "Reprendre le pouvoir aux banques et aux marchés financiers" [Take back power from the banks and financial markets] (see illustration 2). The depiction of a member of the working class taking the clothes of a rich capitalist makes apparent the PCF's belief that the financial power should not reside with capitalists. We understand that these are the class standings of the two figures in the illustration because
of their headgear – traditional hats of each respective class, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, appearing as they did in the nineteenth century during the height of the Industrial Revolution. These hats alone demonstrate the archaic approach of PCF politics and the importance they continue to place on the Marxist texts written during that epoch. The sign above the capitalist's desk reading, "Bank & Co" alludes to not only the banks maintaining control of the economy, but that they have accomplices; perhaps "une classe financière qui possède tout, les banques, les marchés financiers, les multinationales, et qui a déclaré la guerre aux démocraties et aux peuples," [a business class that owns everything, the banks, the financial markets, the multinational corporations, who have declared war to all democracies and peoples] as the PCF stated in its article Non au traité d'austérité.

Another of these illustrations bears the subtitle, "Partager les richesses et abolir l’insécurité sociale" [Share wealth and abolish instability of social security] (see illustration 3). Again, the hats and other attire of the figures in this illustration relay their class standing. The rich capitalist is of course the fellow in the top hat, helping himself to a disproportionate serving of cake, while the poor group of working class members stand by with only one small slice to share between them. Luckily, the figure representing the PCF is there to demand equal servings of the dessert.

The illustration subtitled, "La République pour de vrai" [The Republic for real] (see illustration 4) declares a very radical message. With a figure – bearing a striking resemblance to Sarkozy – representing the République française, French Republic, wearing a crown and being launched off by a working class member says a great deal.
First, it implies that the current republic, the Fifth Republic, is monarchic. Considering the French revolution of 1789 when French citizens gave a violent ending to the the absolute monarchy and the last vestiges of the landed aristocracy, French citizens would likely be extremely adverse to a monarchic government. Secondly, this illustration depicts the solidarity of the working class that the PCF encourages so fervently.

The radical illustrations found on the PCF's website are officially part of Jean Luc Melenchon's campaign as he was the candidate for the Front de Gauche. The PCF had its own candidate as well, Nathalie Arnaud, but its seems that she was far less often in the spotlight and received similar support from the PCF as Melenchon. The fact alone that the PCF has declared a presidential candidate, betrays its willingness to concede to a system that it does not support, the presidential system which puts power in the hands of a relatively small fraction of the population. This goes against the message of the PCF's illustration, "Share wealth…” (see illustration 3). The problem lies in the nature of the PCF as fundamentally existing as a political ideology – communism – rather than a political party. A political party is made up of politicians. This is true for parties like the PS (the party of current French president, François Hollande) or the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP), the Union for a Popular Movement (the party of former French president, Nicolas Sarkozy). A politician's primary aim is to obtain the largest percentage of the vote. They must therefore give and take, sometimes compromising their own ideology/beliefs in order to be successful in the elections. The PCF, I would submit, is not truly a party made up of politicians – perhaps it is not really a political party at all.

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14 It is worth noting that I have not discussed these two candidates as they do not appear to play a large role in the PCF's campaign. Their names rarely appear the articles that I reviewed.
They cannot compromise their ideology and remain the French *Communist* Party, as compromising their ideology would mean ceasing to be communists. This presents the Party with a conundrum for which they have not found an effective solution. It is a paradox that has crippled the Party in a society that continually demands its political institutions to change with it. Decline in popularity is the paradox manifest and trends would suggest that this decline, discussed incessantly throughout this project, will persist.

The question now is, will the PCF's decline eventually end in its complete eradication from French political culture? In *Le Communisme: une passion française*, Lazar (an author discussed previously in my literature review), declared that the PCF could essentially be declared deceased after the presidential elections of 2002. In the same sentence, he mentions the birth of the Party at the Congress of Tours in 1920 as if he is transcribing its death certificate. He notes that the Party "enregistre ainsi les plus faibles résultats de toute son histoire vieille maintenant de quatre-vingt-deux ans" (7). [received the most feable electoral results of its eighty-two year history.] Yet, here we are eleven years later, in 2013, discussing the curious existence of the PCF. Perhaps the fundamental existence of the French Communist Party as an ideology has given it a strange sort of immortality: it will never live again, but it will never die.
Works Cited


