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THE IDEOLOGICAL ODYSSEY OF ROGER GARAUDY

Summary: Preparations for the French Communist Party's 19th Congress have been dominated by l'affaire Garaudy. The PCF's most prominent intellectual has been repeatedly denounced for the views expressed in his latest book, in which he radically criticizes the Soviet system, and calls for a profound transformation of his own party. This paper discusses the evolution of Garaudy's positions: the former Stalinist became a champion of Christian-Communist dialogue and socialist humanism; now, in reaction to the invasion of Czechoslovakia, he has challenged the PCF's most fundamental traditions.

At the end of 1956, in the aftermath of the Hungarian revolution, a group of French communist intellectuals attacked the Soviet intervention and demanded a thorough debate on the problems of communism. To cut them down, the party wheeled out a new member of its Politburo, recently returned from Moscow, who tore into the dissidents for abandoning class positions and adopting a platform in opposition to party policy. The intellectuals were sternly disciplined.

A similar fate, on similar charges, is in store next for the man who played party prosecutor in 1956. Roger Garaudy swallowed Budapest but he cannot stomach

Prague. He will be cut out of the hierarchy in the drab, communist-held suburb of Nanterre on Sunday, at the end of the party's 19th Congress.

The personal turning-point of the man who wrote The Great Turning-Point of Socialism (Le grand tournant du socialisme) is difficult to establish. While he was under heavy fire within the party in 1966, one of his critics said that Garaudy's work had been marked by "erroneous tendencies" for more than six years. Another critic, in the more recent campaign against him, said that Garaudy's movement away from party policy was ten years old.

This would place the beginning of Garaudy's evolution around 1960. At that period the politburo member gave no visible signs of heresy. He first came to public notice under a "liberal" label with the 1963 book written with Louis Aragon, For a Realism Without Borders (D'un réalisme sans rivages), a condemnation of socialist realism and a plea for intellectual freedom.

This work came in for criticism from the Soviet and East European parties, but it was never attacked by the French Party and in fact its fundamental thesis was adopted three years later as official party policy.

Nevertheless, Garaudy clearly ran into trouble in some subterranean debate within the party around this period, because in 1964 he was summarily supplanted as director of the theoretical monthly, Cahiers du communisme. Five members of the magazine's editorial board were dropped at the same time. The party explained that it merely sought to ease Garaudy's work-load.

Garaudy's work-load in 1964 included the first drafts of a new book due to appear the following year, From Anathema to Dialogue (De l'anathème au dialogue), a very open-minded approach to the problem of Christian-Communist relations. It was this book that was to bring "the Garaudy affair" into the open.

### Earlier Rebukes

From Anathema to Dialogue appeared in 1965. The party did not react until early in 1966. It ran a two-column article in the party daily, in which a junior member of the Central Committee was allowed publicly to dismantle the book by the Politburo professor.

The problem was public. The party called a special Central Committee session to settle it. This was held at Argenteuil in March 1966. Eighteen committee members spoke. Fifteen of them attacked Garaudy, only one defended him. Party chief Waldeck Rochet summed up.

Garaudy was wrong, he said, to claim that religion was not invariably an opium and that it had on occasions played the role of "the yeast" in a revolutionary movement. Garaudy was wrong, said Rochet to charge that, because of Stalin, Marxism had undergone "a quarter-century of sclerosis." And Garaudy was also wrong to define Marxism merely as "a methodology of the historic initiative." This definition came close to that laid down by the reformist Karl Kautsky.

The Argenteuil session also revealed something of the underground debate within the party, in which two intellectual camps had clashed. A Garaudy group favored a "creative" approach to Marxism. It was opposed by a rival faction led by professor Louis Althusser, who stressed the need for rigour and purity. The Committee backed neither side. Althusser was told his path could lead to dogmatism. Garaudy was warned against sliding into reformism.

It may be noteworthy that over the past year Althusser's name has crept back into the columns of the party press, which has carried occasional favorable references to his work. It would be inadvisable to conclude from this that the party has veered towards the neo-dogmatist approach of Althusser. It is equally possible that Althusser, taking note of the Argenteuil reprimand, has adjusted his own approach to make it more acceptable to the party. Althusser works behind the scenes and within the party, which makes it difficult to assess his post-Argenteuil evolution. But no such difficulty attaches to Garaudy.

The Argenteuil session was in March 1966. In October 1966, Garaudy brought out another book, Twentieth-Century Marxism (Le marxisme du XXe siècle). It was an attempt, he said, to provoke a collective and public effort to expose the roots of the Stalinist deviation.

Twentieth-Century Marxism was another rebellion by Garaudy. He no longer spoke of religion as a potential "yeast" of revolution, but he still disputed the view that it was always and everywhere an opium. He no longer spoke of a quarter-century of sclerosis, but he still spoke of 25 years of "eclipse." He no longer insisted that Marxism was solely a methodology, but he argued strongly that it was fundamentally and primarily a methodology. And he also sharpened his stand on another point for which he has been attacked at Argenteuil: man was not the victim of history but the creator of history

The book drew two more columns of criticism in the party daily, this time signed, menacingly, by Garaudy's own deputy at the party's Marxist study center. Garaudy was not intimidated. Six months later, he produced another book, The Chinese Problem (Le problème chinois) published in 1967.

This book took a new look at the Chinese issue. It reproduced most of the criticisms issued by the French party leaders, but it went further and tried to uncover the roots of the Maoist deviation. It found them partly in the national conditions inherited by the Chinese Party, partly in a repetition by the Maoists of some of the Stalinist errors.

Garaudy said the Chinese problem had to be studied closely. The communist movement should not "judge before understanding." The solution did not lie in the "anathema" of excommunication, but in a dialogue that could lead to reconciliation.

The party hit out once again. There was no question of conciliation. The Chinese were beyond the pale. They had broken with Marxism-Leninism. They were opposed to the world movement. Their national condition might explain their deviations, but they did not justify them.



It was becoming an annual occurrence: a Garaudy book, a party broadside. From Anathema to Dialogue in 1965. Twentieth Century Marxism in 1966. The Chinese Problem in 1967. But Garaudy exceeded his norm in 1968. That year, he published three books.

#### The Czechoslovak Issue

Garaudy's first book of 1969 was entitled, Can One Be a Communist Today? (Peut-on être communiste aujourd'hui?). In it the Politburo member deepened his criticisms of Stalinist-style bureaucracy, maintained his open-minded approach to the Chinese problem and reaffirmed his controversial advocacy of the integration of Christian values into communism. At another time, the book would have drawn another attack from the party watchdogs. But Garaudy's book was published in April. France was plunged into national crisis in May. There were major elections in June. Clouds gathered over Czechoslovakia in July. The Red Army marched in August. And Garaudy brought out a new book in September.

Garaudy's second book of 1968 was slim and there were only a dozen pages written by Garaudy himself. But the book was a crucial one. It was called Freedom on Parole: Prague 1968 (La liberté en sursis: Prague 1968). Basically it was nothing more than a collection of statements by such Czechoslovak reformers as Dubcek, Richta, Sik and Goldstuecker. But it was important, because it explained Garaudy's third book of 1968.

This book, For a French Model of Socialism (Pour un modèle français du socialisme), was a simple rewrite of Can One be Communist Today? Ninety-five percent of the earlier book remained untouched. But the five percent that was changed showed the acceleration of Garaudy's evolution.

The first version had waxed enthusiastic about Soviet achievements: complete de-Stalinisation was imminent; the process was irreversible. But the second version was bitter. Re-Stalinisation had taken place. The evil was inherent unless the long-delayed analysis was carried out.

Drawing frankly on the Czechoslovak experience, Garaudy urged change upon his party. It should upgrade the intellectuals and, as the Czechoslovaks had done, recognize them as an integral component of what Marx had called The Collective Worker. It should revise its concept of the leading role of the party and, as the Czechoslovaks had done, seek to earn that role and keep it by means of merit and not merely by repression. Finally, and most important, it should abandon the Stalinist practice of democratic centralism, the root of Soviet crimes, and opt for the Dubcek method of truly democratic centralism, which had proved its worth by the mass mobilisation of the Czechoslovaks behind their party.

The May crisis and the August invasion both struck the French Party within the space of 100 days. Around September and October 1968, there was a great deal of talk about drawing conclusions and reexamining attitudes. In this atmosphere, the party went part of the way with Garaudy. It accepted the Marx-Richta-Garaudy viewpoint on The Collective Worker and, while it would not integrate intellectuals into the working-class, it at least agreed to promote them as allies of the workers. The party also accepted the Dubcek-Garaudy idea of the leading role conquered and kept by merit and not by mere administrative liquidation of all rivals. Heartened by these concessions and by the late-1968 promises of reappraisal, Garaudy got back into line. He promised to end his individual activity and lend himself to the collective research for a French path to socialism.

#### The Turning-point

But his path petered out. The party leaders had control of the machine again. They did not intend to share that control with the base. Yet for Garaudy this point was paramount. He traced Soviet sins back to the refusal of democracy within the party, and he traced Czechoslovak successes back to the acceptance of democracy within the party. Garaudy's hopes were dashed and in 1969 he published The Great Turning-Point of Socialism. (Le grand tournant du socialisme).

All Garaudy's earlier points are here in heightened form. In Realism Without Borders he wanted intellectual freedom. Now he wants intellectual equality, with the

intellectuals forming part of a "New Historic Bloc" alongside the workers.

In Anathema to Dialogue he said Marxism was not a pre-written scenario of man's fate but a method by which man could shape and influence his fate. Now he says Marxism is lagging behind the new realities of the technological revolution.

In Twentieth-Century Marxism he said the roots of the old Stalinist deviation had to be stripped bare. Now he says the need is reinforced by the post-Stalinist deviation which seeks to impose the Stalinist model on all parties in the interests of one party.

In The Chinese Problem he offered a veiled defense of national paths. Now the veil is off and he says the issue of a plurality of paths to socialism is the key question in the movement.

Finally in A French Model of Socialism, he condemned the Soviet suppression of the great hope of socialism that was the Prague renewal, and he said it was up to the French communists to take over the torch from the Czechoslovaks. The party refused to do so. Garaudy took on the task himself. At the 19th Congress of the PCF, which begins tomorrow (February 4), he will pay the price -- condemnation and loss of his leadership posts, if not expulsion -- but he will keep his integrity.

J.E.

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