

Socialist Equality Party public meeting in Britain:

## The political lessons of the French presidential elections

17 May 2002

*The Socialist Equality Party of Britain held a public meeting on May 12 in Central London, entitled, "The perspective for socialism in the 21st Century". Below we publish the main report to the meeting delivered by Peter Schwarz, the secretary of the International Committee of the Fourth International, on the political lessons of the French presidential elections.*

France has a long historical tradition as a pioneer of revolutionary action. The French Revolution of 1791-1795 opened the epoch of bourgeois revolution on the European continent. In 1831, in 1848 and again in 1968, France initiated a wave of revolutionary upheavals that swept over Europe.

But while the French masses were unmatched in their revolutionary vigor and their thirst for action, the theoretical and political lessons from these struggles were often drawn and implemented elsewhere. Generally one can say that the political lessons from events taking place in France always proved to be of tremendous international significance. Without the French Revolution, the teachings of Marx and Engels, and even of Hegel, would have been inconceivable. Without the Paris Commune of 1871, there could not have been a successful October 1917 in Russia.

Something similar can be said for the events that shook France over the last two weeks. If the lessons of these events are correctly drawn and understood, they will form the basis for future struggles on a much higher political level not only in France, but all over the world. They have significance extending far beyond the French borders, and contain important political lessons for the international working class.

Political events in France often resemble the eruption of a volcano. Over years, the surface remains calm. Then, suddenly, there is a huge explosive eruption. Geologists understand that the size of such eruptions result from the tensions that have built up under the surface over a protracted period, without finding an outlet.

The presidential elections 2002 seemed to be the most boring, uneventful occasion. Everybody assumed—and all the polls confirmed this—that the runoff would take place between the incumbent president, Jacques Chirac, and the incumbent prime minister, Lionel Jospin, who, despite coming from different political camps, had worked together quite harmoniously over the last five years. Their election programmes were so similar that three weeks before the election 70 percent of those asked could not see a difference.

On the evening of April 21, however, shortly before the polling stations closed, a rumor circulated in the media that Jean-Marie Le Pen, the candidate of the National Front, was preparing a speech. Everybody became attentive. At 8.00pm the exit polls—which are generally fairly accurate—confirmed the initial suspicion: Jean-Marie Le Pen had beaten Lionel Jospin, the Socialist Party candidate, and would stand against Jacques Chirac, the Gaullist, in the second round. Instead of having the usual choice between a candidate of the left-wing and a candidate of the right-wing of the bourgeois establishment, workers had no choice at

all—they were supposed to decide between a direct representative of big business and an open fascist.

Within hours, thousands of youth took to the streets to protest against this state of affairs. The next day they were joined by other sections of the population, who expressed their opposition to Le Pen and his fascist ideology. The demonstrations grew from day to day and spread all over the country. First it was tens of thousands, then hundreds of thousands and on May Day between two and three million, who took to the streets.

An analysis of the election result reveals that it was not the root cause, but rather the trigger for this vast manifestation of popular discontent. It reveals a sharp polarization of French society, and a deep crisis of the entire political establishment and the political institutions.

The two major candidates, Chirac and Jospin, between them only received the support of one quarter of those eligible to vote. Thirty percent abstained, and, of those who went to the polls, 20 percent cast their vote for a candidate of the extreme right, while 10 percent voted for left-wing candidates calling themselves Trotskyist. The rest of the vote was divided up between candidates who either belong to Jospin's camp or to Chirac's camp.

The Chirac camp as a whole lost four million votes compared to the first round in 1995, the last election. The Jospin camp as a whole lost one-and-a-half million votes. This crumbling of the vote for the traditional right and left expresses a deep disaffection of the electorate with those who have ruled the country in different combinations over the last 20 years. It indicates a profound alienation between masses of people and the political establishment.

Le Pen owes his success without any doubt to his ability to exploit this disaffection. He made great efforts to present himself as the only candidate fighting against, as he called it, "the system".

His election statement, distributed freely to every mailbox in the country, was guarded in relation to his traditional themes of xenophobia and racism, but made every attempt to appeal to the oppressed, the humiliated, the excluded, the small people. He blamed Maastricht, Brussels and the euro for the social malaise and every political evil of French society and recommended a return to an isolated French nation as the only possible remedy.

Le Pen maintained his support in the old National Front strongholds in the south and the east of the country, where sharp social tensions in downtrodden suburbs have made certain strata susceptible to his xenophobic ravings. He also made inroads into extremely conservative sections, which had voted for Philippe de Villiers, another right-wing candidate, in the last election. And for the first time he received considerable support in former Communist Party strongholds in the North and around Paris. His support among workers was above average and among the unemployed it was even higher.

Le Pen's vote does not represent mass support for a fascist programme

in France, still less the emergence of a mass fascist movement on the model of Mussolini or Hitler. But that a fascist demagogue could receive considerable support among workers is cause for great concern.

The main responsibility for this state of affairs rests with the Socialist Party and the Communist Party. Le Pen has gained in strength largely because of the right-wing policies pursued by so-called left parties over the last 20 years. This has created the mood of alienation and discouragement exploited by the National Front.

The Socialist Party, headed by Jospin, won the parliamentary elections five years ago by posing as a defender of traditional social-reformist policies. All over Europe Jospin was presented as a left-wing alternative to more right-wing social democrats like Britain's Tony Blair and Germany's Gerhard Schröder. As it turned out, his policies differed only in presentation, but not in substance from those of more right-wing European governments. As he admitted in his campaign, his party may call itself "socialist," but his programme is "not socialist."

The Jospin government took responsibility for imposing all the sacrifices in jobs and social programmes required as a condition for the establishment of the European monetary system and the launching of the single currency, the euro. The law on the 35-hour-week provoked particular anger amongst his electorate. What was presented as the major social reform of Jospin's entire term in office turned out to be a means to lower wages, to create precarious jobs and to introduce workplace flexibility.

The Jospin government supported French imperialism in Africa, the Middle East, the Balkans and most recently Afghanistan. It is already committed to participating in an American war on Iraq, an imperialist intervention that could destabilize the entire Middle East and lead to a more general inter-imperialist war. Jospin has thus placed himself on the same side of the barricades as Le Pen, the former Algerian paratrooper and torturer.

The Communist Party has had the main responsibility for introducing the poison of anti-immigrant chauvinism into the working class. Its presidential candidate and leader Robert Hue first came to prominence 20 years ago, as the mayor of a Paris suburb who whipped up hatred and fear of immigrant workers. In this he paved the way for Le Pen in the former Communist Party strongholds.

The collapse of the vote of this old Stalinist organization is one of the most remarkable aspects of the election result. Ever since it participated in the Popular Front of 1936, where it helped to head off a huge strike wave and to strangle the Spanish revolution, the Communist Party was the principal pillar of French capitalism within the workers' movement.

In 1968, when its support reached its peak in the post war period, it helped sell-out the general strike and paved the way for De Gaulle, who had already fled to Germany, to come back into France.

Now, for the first time in an advanced capitalist country, two candidates describing themselves as Trotskyists—Arlette Laguiller from Lutte Ouvrière and Olivier Besancenot from the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire surpassed the Stalinist candidate. The vote of the Communist Party candidate dropped from 2.6 million in 1995 to less than one million in 2002.

With 3.4 percent of the vote the party did not even reach the 5 percent necessary to obtain state funding and, having spent 6.5 million euro in the campaign, is virtually bankrupt. Communist Party members waving collecting tins, most of them in their sixties or seventies, were a common sight in all the demonstrations.

The three million votes for candidates who are generally referred to as the "extreme left" in France is the other remarkable aspect of this election. The huge vote for the radical left—as well as the massive turn out in the anti-Le Pen demonstrations—are an unmistakable sign that there is a widespread search for a left-wing political alternative.

Laguiller, Besancenot and Daniel Gluckstein, the candidate of the Parti

des Travailleurs, received more than 10 percent of the vote. This is a considerable share. One should remember that the German Greens, who have provided the Vice Chancellor and the Foreign Minister for the last four years, never received such a high national score in their entire history.

The result for the socialist left is even more remarkable in light of the hysterical, anticommunist campaign that swept the country over the last decade. It is in France, that Stéphane Courtois' *Black Book on Communism* and François Furet's *The End of Illusions* were published. The campaign initiated by these books, reverberated among a wide range of intellectual and political figures. Its aim was to blame Lenin, Trotsky and Marxism in general for every crime committed by its Stalinist enemies—Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot and even Sendero Luminoso.

As the election result demonstrates, this had very little impact.

To sum up, the result of the first round of the election revealed a twofold crisis:

A crisis of bourgeois society and its political institutions expressed in the sharp polarisation of the vote, and the turn away from the candidates and the parties of the establishment.

And a crisis of political perspective of the working class, expressed in the fact that a section of workers and unemployed voted for their worst enemy, Le Pen, in the fact that 12 million abstained and—as we will see—in the inability of the extreme left to meet up to the political responsibilities arising from its high vote and to offer a way out of the crisis.

The central task posed by the April 21 result was clearly not limited to a recommendation on how to vote on May 5, the second round of the election. Rather it was the development of an independent policy that would allow the working class to take the initiative and show a way out of the social crisis that was manifested in the election result.

The leading representatives of the bourgeoisie were very aware that the result of the election and the following mass demonstrations expressed a potential challenge to their entire political system.

After the massive May Day demonstration in Paris I attended a public meeting that brought a representative section of the leading lights of French political and intellectual life together. It was organised by the traditional, republican journal, *Marianne*.

All the major parties of the bourgeois right were represented on the platform—Jean-Pierre Raffarin of Démocratie Libérale, who has been nominated prime minister in the meantime, François Bayrou of the Union pour la Démocratie Française (UDF), and a representative of Chirac's Rassemblement Pour la République (RPR). Leading figures of the governmental left were present—Dominique Strauss-Kahn, a Socialist Party leader and former minister of finance, Noël Mamère, the presidential candidate of the Greens, as well as a spokesman for the Citizen Movement of Jean-Pierre Chevènement. There were leading intellectuals—the philosophers Alain Finkielkraut and Bernard-Henri Levy, the editor of *Le Monde*, Edwy Plenel, who is a former member of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, and finally there was the LCR itself, represented by Daniel Bensaïd, its leading intellectual figure.

Minor political differences notwithstanding, everyone on the platform agreed that the election result expressed a deep alienation of the electorate from the political establishment and that it manifested a crisis of the entire institutional framework. And everyone made proposals as to how this could be overcome without endangering the bourgeois foundations of the republic.

Many called for a Sixth Republic to replace the present Fifth Republic set up by Charles de Gaulle in 1958. The legislative, elected in June, should immediately be transformed into a constituent assembly, someone proposed. There were calls to listen more carefully to the people and to present one's policies accordingly. Needless to say, everyone on the platform called for a vote for Chirac. This should not be done with reluctance, but "with enthusiasm", the philosopher Levy insisted.

As soon as the demonstrations gained momentum, all the parties of the governmental left intervened in order to channel them behind support for Chirac and the discredited institutions of the Fifth Republic. The campaign, which they initiated and which was echoed by every television station and print media, was extraordinary. The only way to stop Le Pen was to vote for Chirac, people were told from early morning till late at night. In order to oppose fascism you had to demonstrate your loyalty to the Republic by voting massively for Chirac.

The danger of fascism was grossly exaggerated. Chirac, the right-wing, utterly corrupt politician who has only evaded criminal proceedings because of his presidential immunity, was glorified and presented as the saviour of democracy.

Socialist, Communist and Green Party members flooded the demonstrations with banners calling for a vote for Chirac. Chirac's elections posters were decorated with stickers, carrying the Socialist Party symbol and the words: "I vote Chirac". The most outspoken newspaper in favour of Chirac was *Libération*, the left-liberal daily edited by a former Maoist. Chirac's election campaign was almost exclusively conducted by the parties of the Left. The right-wing parties abstained from the demonstrations and were generally passive.

Chirac himself used the time to clean up his own camp in preparation for the June legislative elections. In an attempt to unsettle his rivals inside the right-wing camp, he formed a new party, the Union for a Presidential Majority. François Bayrou, the leader of the liberal UDF, denounced this as a virtual coup, aimed at destroying his own formation.

In another demonstrative gesture, Chirac made a public appearance with three regional presidents, who came into office with the support of the National Front. This was a clear signal that he would look for the support of the National Front in the second round of the upcoming legislative election.

The extreme left completely adapted itself to the campaign in support of Chirac. This was done most openly by the LCR. Alain Krivine's party called to "fight Le Pen on the street and at the polls". This could only be interpreted—and was made overt by leading representatives of the party—as a recommendation to vote Chirac. The Parti des Travailleurs and Lutte Ouvrière were somewhat more reluctant to call for a Chirac vote. The PT just disappeared from the scene and said it would give no recommendation. Lutte Ouvrière said it would not vote for Chirac and, after a week of vacillation, called for handing in an invalid ballot. This was no more than an individual gesture, giving no independent orientation to the working class.

Under these conditions, the campaign to vote Chirac had an impact. The turn out in the second round was 10 percent higher than in the first and Chirac received 82 percent of the vote. Obviously many of those who voted for him did not do so because they supported his programme. Nevertheless, Chirac's confirmation with a huge majority has created a dangerous situation for the working class. As an elected president, Chirac wields tremendous power in his hands. He has immediately installed a new right-wing government that does not need parliamentary confirmation before the June election. The main purpose of this government is to make sure that he gets a right-wing parliamentary majority in June.

While the new Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin is a compromise figure, appealing to the traditional middle class, Chirac has also formed the super-ministry for inner security, which he promised in the election campaign. The Gaullist right-winger Nicolas Sarkozy heads it. Sarkozy paid visit to one of the troubled suburbs on his first day in office and is obviously preparing some spectacular police action against petty criminals before the election, in order to woo the right-wing electorate.

Such a right-wing government would implement vicious attacks on the working class and represent a sharp shift to the right in domestic and social policies. The working class, after having voted massively for Chirac, would find it very difficult to challenge the legitimacy of such a

government.

Even if Chirac does not receive a right-wing majority in June, another five years of cohabitation will aggravate the very conditions that have given rise to Le Pen's success. The political and social putrefaction of society will continue and create the conditions for a real fascist danger to emerge. Under conditions where the campaign in support of Chirac has left the working class utterly confused, this danger should not be underestimated. The task of building an independent alternative for the working class is posed sharper than ever.

I began my speech with the remark that the political lessons from events taking place in France have always been of tremendous international significance. How can these lessons be drawn? The most important prerequisite is the intervention of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and its public organ, the *World Socialist Web Site*, in the French election.

If any proof was needed that the political instrument built by the ICFI over the last four years has a tremendous potential, our intervention in France has provided it. Even though we do not have a section in France and our forces are very limited, the call for a boycott by the *World Socialist Web Site* editorial board, distributed on the May Day demonstration in thousands of copies, was virtually the only statement providing an independent political orientation—and it certainly had an impact.

The impact was not so much on the election result—this could only be minimal under the given circumstances. It created the conditions to draw important political lessons, to politically educate workers and to develop their revolutionary consciousness. It demonstrated in a concrete way that the fascist danger can be fought without subordinating the working class to ever more right-wing bourgeois politicians. It undermined the claim by the LCR, Lutte Ouvrière and the PT to represent authentic Trotskyism and in this way prepared the way for building a section of the IC in France.

The *World Socialist Web Site* called for a boycott of the second round of the election. In an open letter, which was addressed to LO, the LCR and the PT, we urged these organisations to campaign actively for such a boycott.

A boycott has a different character to an abstention or a blank vote. Abstentions or blank votes are individual forms of protest, performed in the privacy of the election booth or in one's home. A boycott, campaigned for aggressively by parties that received a considerable share of the vote, is an organised expression of an independent political stand by the working class. The aim of a boycott was, as we explained in a letter to a Lutte Ouvrière supporter, "to mobilise the working class as an active political force, putting the working class at the head of all those who oppose the entire political establishment, both 'left' and right, and the fascist reaction."

Such a boycott would have denied any legitimacy to a fraudulent election without any real choice for workers, who were asked to decide between a big business candidate and an open fascist. It would have created the best conditions for the political struggles that will arise in the aftermath of the elections. It would have served to politically educate the masses, and especially the young people, who have been set into motion by the shock of Le Pen's success in the first round. It would have taught them to see through the lies of the bourgeois political establishment, who claim that a vote for Chirac represents the defence of democracy.

The main objection raised against a boycott was that it could lead to a Le Pen victory in the second round. We answered this objection in the open letter:

"Some may argue that boycotting the May 5 vote will strengthen Le Pen and his fascist movement. We reject such claims entirely. Politics is not arithmetic, and opposition to Le Pen does not require support for Chirac. On the contrary, it is the official campaign for Chirac, uniting the governmental right and governmental left which reinforces Le Pen's

entirely false and demagogic claim that he alone gives voice to popular opposition to the political establishment.

“A widespread campaign of boycott and opposition to May 5, spearheaded by the socialist left and mobilising workers and youth against both Le Pen and Chirac, would puncture Le Pen’s false pretences and demonstrate to the broad masses that there is a progressive social force which challenges the existing social and political order.”

We insisted that even if Le Pen won, he would not be able to subjugate the French people to a totalitarian dictatorship. In fact, the left-wing parties grossly exaggerated Le Pen’s strength, in order to prevent any discussion of their own political responsibility for the social malaise.

Not one of the three organisations, to whom the open letter was addressed, responded in a positive way and took up the demand for a boycott.

We handed the letter personally to their offices and asked for a discussion. The LCR said they had no time to speak to us. At the PT headquarters we met a longstanding member, who spoke to us in a personal capacity. Lutte Ouvrière sent a short note to a supporter of the *World Socialist Web Site*, and the editorial board received a letter from a sympathiser, which we published with an answer. Finally on May 5, after the second round, Arlette Laguiller gave us a short interview explaining her attitude to the open letter.

Despite this very limited reaction, the discussion provoked by the open letter has contributed to the clarification of basic questions of perspective. It has helped to delineate a genuinely Marxist, revolutionary orientation from a centrist line.

The political course pursued by LO, the LCR and PT is characterised by gross opportunism. They all adapted, in one form or another, to the campaign in support of Chirac. The conception that a Marxist party has to swim against the stream and to fight against the prevailing forms of consciousness is entirely anathema to them.

Arlette Laguiller summed up the classical position of opportunism in the interview with the *World Socialist Web Site*, when she said: “We always put forward proposals that we think are in line with the relationship of forces and with what the working class is prepared to do in a given country.”

Marxists proceed from objective conditions and the tasks imposed by these conditions on the working class, and fight to raise the consciousness of the workers and bring it in line with these tasks. Whereas Laguiller, as a typical opportunist, begins from the subjective level of consciousness of the working class, as she assesses it, and seeks to adapt her programme accordingly.

Actually, there was only one way to find out “what the working class was prepared to do”, i.e., if it was prepared to support an organised boycott: To campaign for it aggressively. Given the enormous unpopularity of Chirac there can be no doubt that such a campaign would have found a response.

But Lutte Ouvrière is so much dominated by the most immediate forms of working class consciousness and activity, that every time a huge political movement erupts, they are taken by complete surprise. As far as they are concerned, there will never be a “relationship of forces” favourable enough for the working class to take the initiative. As Trotsky has pointed out many times, particularly in his writings on France, it is impossible to understand the real relationship of forces without taking into account the subjective factor, that is the active role of the party and its leadership.

Lutte Ouvrière can only conceive of working class activity in terms of trade union struggles and are virtually blind to any political movement. The most astonishing thing said by Laguiller in her interview was the claim that “the mobilisation of the working class ... is absolutely non-existent in this country at the moment as far as struggles are concerned.”

This after two weeks of mass demonstrations and major political

upheavals!

The political opportunism and passivity of Lutte Ouvrière is bound up with their narrow, national outlook. This organisation, whose roots go back to the 1930s, has always refused to join the Fourth International. The reason given was that the leadership of the Fourth International was petty bourgeois in its social composition and that it was more important to stick with French workers than to join an international organisation. In political terms this means that the ties to the thoroughly opportunist national trade union milieu are considered more important than an international, political orientation.

Arlette Laguiller is the personification of this perspective. I read one of her election speeches, given in front of 2,000 supporters. During the entire speech, lasting more than an hour, she did not mention a single international event. The war in Afghanistan, where French troops are heavily involved, the crisis in the Middle East, globalisation, the European Union—all this was not considered worthwhile mentioning. It was as if France was an island on a different planet.

The revolutionary Arlette Laguiller is—in many ways—the most conservative person you can meet in France. She has lived all her life in the same flat; she worked for 40 years in the same job... and for 30 years she has given the same speech. All her speeches and editorials have the same lamenting, complaining intonation: “The bosses are exploiting you, the government is deceiving you and supporting the bosses.” You look in vain for a bold initiative or a political orientation.

The LCR has a different social orientation and political outlook than Lutte Ouvrière. Their point of reference is not the trade union milieu, but the political “left”; i.e., the left periphery of the bourgeois establishment. Krivine hopes that he can build a centrist swamp from out of the debris of the present political crisis. This would include dissidents from the Socialist, Communist and Green parties, protest movements like ATTAC, the Sans Papiers, AC Chomage, and radicalised students who voted for the LCR candidate.

In an interview with *Le Figaro*, Krivine indicated that even a fusion of the LCR with the remains of the Communist Party is not excluded. The implosion of the Communist Party, he said, could lead to the formation “of a new feminist, ecologist, anti-capitalist party that would not be limited to the present extreme left.”

Krivine’s model is Rifondazione Communista in Italy, which emerged from the pro-Stalin wing of the Communist Party and has, at its recent congress, publicly renounced the Stalinist past in favour of an opening towards anti-globalisation and other protest movements like ATTAC. For a long time, Rifondazione has been playing a crucial role as a left cover for the centre-left government that was finally replaced by the right-wing coalition of Berlusconi. The Italian Pabloites—the LCR’s co-thinkers—have played a leading role inside Rifondazione over this entire period.

Because most of the forces that Krivine has in mind have campaigned actively for a vote for Chirac, it is obvious why the LCR could not openly oppose such a vote: It would have lost too many of its friends. At the same time, its call for a Chirac vote has a definite political meaning: It is a signal to the ruling elite that they respect the constitutional framework of the French republic and will not allow a social movement controlled by them to disregard it.

The centrist movement Krivine is striving for would replace Jospin’s plural left, which has served the French bourgeoisie so well over the last five years to control the working class. It would not be anti-capitalist, but rather a last defence for the capitalist system.

The PT has simply refused to take any political responsibility for the events after the first round of the election. The senior member we met in the party headquarters told us: “We are not giving a recommendation.” Asked for his opinion on a boycott, he said, like Laguiller, that the “relationship of forces” would not allow it.

The PT candidate, Daniel Gluckstein, issued a short statement after the

results were announced, expressing his confidence in “the ability of the workers, to find by themselves, through their own mobilisation, all the means that are necessary to find a solution to the present, difficult period”. Asked by his supporters what to do, this party leader responds: “I am confident that you will find an answer yourselves.” If this is the case, there is obviously no need for the PT to exist.

Otherwise Gluckstein referred his supporters to the trade union bureaucracy. “As it was the case on many previous occasions,” he said, “the defence of democracy goes through the ability of the trade union federations to unite the workers and their organisations in defence of their rights and achievements and in defence of democracy.” This under conditions where less than eight percent of the French workforce is union members and the unions have been the staunchest supporters of the Jospin government!

The PT has degenerated into a wing of the trade union bureaucracy, working mainly through Force Ouvrière, a right-wing split off from the CGT, which it controls. It has a direct responsibility for the present events, as its predecessor, the International Communist Organisation (OCI), trained many leading members of the Socialist Party, including Jospin himself.

To sum up: The events in France are by no means unique. The same social tensions and political crisis of the traditional parties and state institutions can be seen everywhere in Europe, albeit in different forms. The bold intervention made by the *World Socialist Web Site* in France demonstrates how the struggle for the political independence of the working class can be carried forward.

“Our fundamental point of contention with Lutte Ouvrière” and all the other left-wing groups “is that we give first place to the political education of the workers, the development of their revolutionary consciousness, rather than to any specific form of practical activity, such as the trade union struggle”, as Patrick Martin pointed out in his answer to a Lutte Ouvrière supporter.

It is precisely for this purpose that we initiated the call for a boycott of the second round. This has initiated a discussion and a process of clarification that will not stop after the election. It takes audacity, tenacity and a lot of patience. There is a lot of confusion in the working class and these questions have to be explained and argued for, over and over again.

We are fighting to unite the working class internationally on the basis of a socialist programme. Our answer to the European Union, controlled by the big banks and conglomerates, is the United Socialist States of Europe. We can have great confidence that our struggle will find a growing audience and finally prevail over the opportunism that was demonstrated by the extreme left in France.



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