



FRENCH POLITICS AND SOCIETY – TOWARDS THE ‘VITH REPUBLIC’?

REPORT OF A GERMAN-FRENCH SEMINAR IN PARIS, 27.01.2003 –02.02.2003

EUROPA-UNIVERSITÄT VIADRINA & SCIENCES PO PARIS

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PROGRAM

| TAG | PROGRAMM | |
|---------------------|-----------|--|
| MONDAY, 27.01.03 | | DEPARTURE FORM FRANKFURT (ODER) |
| TUESDAY, 28.01.03 | MORNING | INTRODUCTION, BARBARA LAMBAUER |
| | AFTERNOON | POLITICAL PARIS |
| WEDNESDAY, 29.01.03 | MORNING | DISCUSSION: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN FRENCH POLITICS |
| | AFTERNOON | PREPARATION OF RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTATION |
| THURSDAY, 30.01.03 | MORNING | RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTATION |
| | AFTERNOON | RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTATION |
| FRIDAY, 31.01.03 | MORNING | ROUNDTABLE WITH POLITICAL SCIENTISTS |
| | AFTERNOON | VISITING OF CICAL |
| SATURDAY, 01.02.03 | MORNING | CONCLUDING REMARKS |
| | AFTERNOON | VISITING OF SENATE, PARK LUXEMBOURG |
| SUNDAY, 02.02.03 | MORNING | ARRIVAL IN FRANKFURT (ODER) |

‘FRENCH POLITICS – TOWARDS THE VITH REPUBLIC?’ – This was the name of a seminar at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder) led by Prof. Dr. Michael Minkenberg and the name and content of our field trip to Paris and the Science Po from January 27th until February 2nd.

Led by Prof. Michael Minkenberg and co-financed by the OFAJ, a group of 10 students from the Viadrina had the chance to spend a week in Paris and discuss current developments in French Politics with students from the Sciences Po. These lively discussions with the French students seemed to all an enriching experience both for scientific and personal ends. Our programme also included some sightseeing of political sites of Paris, such as the Senate, or the Assemblée Nationale. The field trip thus enabled us to deepen our knowledge on French politics.

The following contains a detailed day-by-day report of the field trip and seminar.

TUESDAY, 28TH OF JANUARY 2003

10:30 – 12:30

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

Thanks to the possibility to sleep on the train, we arrived in Paris Tuesday morning at 9 a.m. quite fresh. After locking up our luggage and buying a metro-ticket for the week, we drove to Sciences Po. For almost all of us, it has been the first visit to Paris. Thus Prof. Minkenberg took the chance to show some sites of political and historical interest. Passing through St. Germain des-Prés (the oldest church in Paris) we learned that the streets in the area were central during the 68-revolts. Moreover, we heard that people of public interest, such as Francois Mitterrand or Jean Paul Sartre used to meet and drink coffee just around the corner of Science Po.

In Sciences Po we were welcomed by Barbara Lambauer. She gave us an extensive introduction to the University, its structure and profile and showed us around. We then met the students’ group from the Sciences Po. We introduced ourselves and presented shortly the content and the questions of our seminar “French Politics and Society: Towards a VIth Republic?”. Immediately an interesting discussion developed on whether the VIth Republic is a relevant issue or not.

However, we unfortunately had to interrupt this discussion due to the lunch break and went together into one of the University canteens.

TUESDAY, 28TH OF JANUARY 2003
14 :00 – 16 :00
‘POLITICAL PARIS’

On Tuesday afternoon we met in front of the Science Po to visit some of the political sites in Paris. Led by Prof. Minkenberg we had a real insight in what we before read and discussed about.

We went down to the Seine and arrived at the Quai d’Orsay. The **Quai d’Orsay** houses the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**. The building, which was called Hôtel du ministre des affaires étrangères from the beginning, was built 1844-53 and is a perfect example of Second Empire architecture. The room where the office of the minister is situated has been the same since that time. Nowadays, the term “ministry of foreign affairs” is most commonly substituted by the term “Quai d’Orsay”. From there we crossed a bridge, where we had a nice view on the one side on the Cathedral **Notre Dame**, situated on the Ile de la Cité, behind us **the Musée d’Orsay**, an old railway station, which was rebuild into an art museum, and on the other side the **Palais du Louvre**. In the "courtyard" of the Louvre we saw the two glass pyramids constructed at the instigation of the former French president Francois Mitterand. From there we pursued our route passing by the **Tuilerie Garden** (the former royal gardens) to the Place de la Concorde, where we could see the **Champs Elysée** and at its end the **Arc de Triomphe**. The arch dates back to 1806, when Napoléon commissioned Chalgrin to build an arch to the glory of the French Army. Construction of the Arch began in 1806, restarted in 1825, and was not finished until 1836. Behind the Arc de Triomphe we could distinguish a shape of the **Grande Arc de la Defense**, which was also constructed in the presidential period of Francois Mitterand. Turning left we went straight towards the rive gauche and approached the **Assemblée Nationale**, which is situated right next to the Quai d’Orsay, in the Palais Bourbon. The Palais was built 1722-28 for the Duchess of Bourbon and was confiscated in 1791 to be declared “good of the nation”. This way, it became the first republican palace in Paris. It hosted subsequently the École polytechnique and the Council of the Five Hundred. The state took definitive possession of the Palais as late as 1827, it was then that it was designated to host the lower chamber of parliament, which, in turn, did not move there until 1848. Nowadays the “cité Assemblée Nationale” comprises some more recent buildings on Boulevard St. Germain and Rue de l’université, where the offices of the representatives are to be found. Still, the Palais Bourbon is becoming too small for the French Parliament and so the chamber is examining propositions to remodel the Palais and its environs. We continued our route to the rue de Varenne, where the **Hôtel Matignon** is situated, the seat of the French prime minister. It was built 1722-25 for a duke who chose the site for its proximity to Versailles. It belonged among others to Talleyrand. In the Second Republic, it became home to the head of the executive branch. It then went on to become the Austro-Hungarian Embassy under the Third Republic. After World War I, France assumed ownership of the “enemy property” and in 1935 it was made the headquarter of the President of the Council (comparable to the prime minister).

Unfortunately the day was not a sunny one. And while we walked around in the small, narrow streets, where we could find almost all the seats of the French political institutions, it began to rain very strongly and we had to hide already quite wet in a warm place. So our first day in Paris ended up by a cup of hot Café Crème and a lot of new impressions.

WEDNESDAY, 29TH OF JANUARY 2003

10:30 – 12:30

DISCUSSION: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN FRENCH POLITICS

Wednesday morning we got together with the French students' group for a first introductory discussion on the alleged evolution of the Vth Republic. Besides Prof. Minkenberg, Dr. Riva Kastoryano also took part in the discussion.

Each of the students seemed to have his/her own vision of the direction that the French Republic is heading at, yet some of the conclusions varied fundamentally. Some claimed it is likely to conclude that the system will gradually evolve towards parliamentarism, others argued quite the opposite – it is more likely to expect the VIth Republic to be a presidential system.

The most exciting part of discussion was, however, the presentation of the concept of the VIth Republic by a French student and member of the so-called "Convention for the 6th republic". John Palacin managed to depict the major principles of the conception and triggered off a constructive debate. As it turned out, Viadrina students had many questions to the convention representative. All were answered and briefly discussed. Several issues and concepts were again juxtaposed and compared.

Dr. Kastoryano finally concluded that it had been an interesting experience to witness the remarkable discrepancy in the way the French and the foreign students perceive French political reality. Obviously, the attitudes differ depending on whether one is inside or outside of the system. Also, the methodology of Viadrina and Sciences Po students seems to be different. We stick to theoretical analysis while our French counterparts focused more on applied sciences. Yet, it is reasonable to conclude that all the participants have immensely benefited from the Wednesday's morning session.

WEDNESDAY, 29TH OF JANUARY 2003

14:00 – 18:00

Wednesday afternoon the participants from the Viadrina prepared their research paper presentation for the next day.

THURSDAY, 30TH OF JANUARY 2003

10:15 – 12:15

RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTATIONS, FIRST ROUND

During the Thursday morning session three students from the Viadrina presented their research papers about French politics to a German-French auditorium. The first two papers dealt with the power and role of the French President, whereas the third analysed the French branch of 'ATTAC' as a new social movement. All issues were lively discussed by the participants. The exchange of the German (mainly textbook based knowledge) and the French view (besides textbook knowledge based on first-hand experience) turned out to be interesting and fruitful for the participants and revealed new views on these issues.

In the first presentation Anna Choda compared the power of the French president in the French 5th Republic with the power of the president of Poland's 3rd Republic. Anna Choda argued that both systems can be categorised as semi-presidential systems. Nevertheless, the power and role of the President in France differs from the one in Poland. Whereas in the French case the President holds a strong position, his influence is much weaker in the Polish case. The lively discussion between French, Polish and German participants revealed that it could be useful to compare the constitutions more carefully by concentrating on the role and the power of the president in both countries focusing on the three following aspects: the relation between the president and the parties, the relation between the president and the parliament and the relationship between the president and the premier.

The second presentation by Ye Xiaofei analysed the power of the French president throughout the history of the 5th Republic and generated three categories according to the extent of power of the French president: all powerful, less powerful and cooptation. The criteria for the distinction between 'all powerful' and 'less powerful' was heavily discussed by the participants. Here the main focus was on two aspects: first, on whether quantitative (majority, e.g. seats in parliament) or qualitative measures (a conflictive opposition) or a combination of both should be regarded as decisive for the extent of the presidential power. Second, according to the first aspect, some of the classifications made by Ye Xiaofei were questioned by the French students and confronted with their view on the power of the president during certain periods of time.

The third presentation by Marta Stypa dealt with the French branch of 'ATTAC' raising the question whether it is a *new* social movement in the sense that it is not – as other social movements of the 70s - strongly connected with the French Communist Party. For analysing this issue, the history of Attac and its origins in France, its organisational structures and its relation to the party system was shortly described. Here the French participants enriched the discussion with their first-hand knowledge on social movements – especially the women's movement - in France and its relation towards the Communist Party.

THURSDAY, 30TH OF JANUARY 2003

14:45 – 16:45

RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTATIONS, SECOND ROUND

During the Thursday afternoon session another three students from the Viadrina presented their research paper proposals. The first two papers dealt with the Front National (FN), the third paper aimed at proving that the French Party System is moving from a multi-party to a two-party system. As in the morning session, the exchange between the German and the French view enriched the discussion and provided helpful information for the students from the Viadrina.

The first paper by Krzysztof Brosz aimed at placing the Front National (FN) within a new cleavage of French politics and society by arguing that the FN is on the one hand transcending old cleavages by picking up different conflict issues of different societal groups. Referring to the issue of immigration it was argued that the FN on the other hand contributed in producing new cleavages in the French society, consisting mainly in a more general right-directed shift in French politics. The following discussion concentrated on the application of the concept of cleavages. It was argued that its application requires the analysis of both ends of a cleavage on the political and social level as well as the identification of the „headings“ of the cleavage,

e.g. religion or class. One French student explained that in terms of the old left-right cleavage the FN represents an ambivalent case because it holds a left position in the field of economy and a right one in social matters. In his concluding remarks, Prof. Minkenberg proposed to take a closer look at the FN's voters, their values and level of education in order to find out whether there is a new cleavage at all and how it could be conceptualised.

The second research paper dealt with the question in how far the Front National (FN) can be classified as antidemocratic. Wojtek Zytkowskiak examined the party's program by looking at its position towards political pluralism, balance of power and civil rights. He claimed that in terms of political procedures one cannot say that the FN is entirely antidemocratic, stressing that the FN's acceptance of democratic procedures within the existing legal framework is more important than their attitude towards civil rights. In the following discussion, the separation of values and procedures was heavily criticised, partly because the practice of politics showed that in some cases the FN did not respect the principle of pluralism (Pierre), partly because a separate analysis of procedures that leaves out democratic values is not sufficient (Minkenberg). The concluding proposal of Prof. Minkenberg was to take a look at the values involved when analysing the party's program and to analyse the concrete practices in a city where the FN came to power.

The central thesis of the last research paper by Ma Xiaojun was that today's France is moving from a multi-party system to a two-party system, each of the parties representing one end of a cleavage. Krzysztof Brosz added that the existence of many parties can serve as an indicator of several cleavages. During the discussion Ma Xiaojun offered another interpretation of the development towards a two party system, namely that this could also be a sign of weakening cleavages. This was opposed by Prof. Minkenberg because a weakening cleavage could as well lead to a diversification within the party system. The main aim of the paper should be the analysis of reasons for the concentration on two parties in French politics, since one could also argue that the opposite is happening, namely that France is moving from a two-block system in the 70s to a more diverse party system today.

FRIDAY, 31ST OF JANUARY 2003

10:30 – 12:30

ROUNDTABLE WITH POLITICAL SCIENTISTS: Prof. Minkenberg, Prof. Martin Schain (NYU), Dr. Riva Kastoryano (Sciences Po), Dr. Fabien Jobard (CEDSIP Paris)

Friday 31st of January was dedicated to the discussion of current political developments in French politics and society with experts on the topics. Martin Schain from New York University gave an interesting overview on French politics, Riva Kastoryano (Sciences Po) spoke about immigration in France and Fabien Jobard (CEDSIP Paris) focused on law and order policies and the Front National. All three issues were lively discussed by the French-German participants.

Commenting the introductory remarks by Prof. Minkenberg on the title of the Seminar 'French Politics and Society - Towards the VIth Republic?' all experts agreed that the Vth Republic is not at all coming to an end. Instead of treating the concept of the VIth Republic as a currently ongoing process, one should, according to Michael Schain, rather see it as a theoretical one. Schain argued that the French state was even strengthened by the last elections in terms of its institutional frameworks. Thus no indicators of a new shape of the French state appeared that could justify the use of the term VIth Republic.

In his presentation, Martin Schain (New York University) identified an interesting pattern in the history of the French party system in its relation to the President. He noted that all presidential elections which were recognized as crisis ones (1958, 1968, 1974) were followed by a reorganization of the party system. Thus, these elections reorganized the French party system by creating a strong political camp around the new president. Hence it seems that in crisis times the French party system is shaped mostly by the presidential elections. Similar developments could be, according to Schain, seen in the 2002 elections as well, where, however, the state as a whole was not in crisis. Here Schain identified the proliferation and internal problems of the left as being responsible for its poor scores and Le Pen's success.

In her presentation Riva Kastoryano dealt with immigration as a policy issue. According to a shift in state policy towards immigrants she identified two major periods, the first until 1981 and the second after 1981. As the left allowed immigrants to sustain their identity, the policy was changed from a concept of one nation to which immigrants come in order to become a part of it towards a concept of a French nation of nations with the 'droit de la difference'. This shift caused a new approach to immigration – a cultural one instead of an economic one. According to Kastoryano the Front National exactly presents this concept.

Fabien Jobard focused in his presentation on the issue of law and order (home security). He showed that the left under Jospin had already in June 2001 introduced a 'law on daily security', which very much resembled law and order policies.

Trying to sum up the discussion, the experts concluded that both the FN in particular and the issue of immigration in general will stay out as the main issues of the political and sociological discourse in France.

Unfortunately, not all questions of the participants could have been answered. The lively discussion on current issues in French politics had unfortunately been ended after two hours of intensive exchange.

FRIDAY, 31ST OF JANUARY 2003

14 :00 – 16 :00

GERMAN – FRENCH RELATIONS

Friday afternoon we had the chance to visit the German Embassy's information center (CIDAL) and to meet its director.

We were warmly welcomed by the director, who was very much interested in our University. We shortly introduced ourselves, our studies and our university. Especially the international atmosphere of the Viadrina met the interest of the director.

The director then presented the Information Center to us. Founded 8 years ago it is its overall aim to improve the relations between Germany in France by providing information about Germany. Three similar centers can be found in New York, London and Moscow. The main role of these centers is to bring Germany closer to the people: as a State, as a nation and as a political economic and cultural partner.

According to the director, the German-French relations have very well developed on different levels during the last 40 years. We learned that among other projects, about 200 partnerships were created between towns in Germany and in France. A cooperation between German and French schools has been developed to enable the students to get into contact with the culture

of the neighboring state. Furthermore, the work of the OFAJ/DFJP encouraged lively exchange between young people of both countries.

Asked about his opinion about the current state of the French-German relations, the director said that these relations have been very good and will – as the two countries have many ties - continue to develop well. As an example the director recalled chancellor Schröder's and President Chirac's cooperation concerning the development of the EU. However, he explained his disapproval for the notion of a "German-French Confederation State".

Especially the current situation concerning Iraq – the letter of 'The Eight', which had been published a day before our visit turned out to be an issue of great discussion.

The meeting with the director of the CIDAL was very interesting and allowed us some insight in the work of the German information center and the French-German relationship.

SATURDAY, 01ST OF FEBRUARY 2003

11:00 – 13:00

CONCLUSION / ABSCHLUSSDISKUSSION

On the last day of our seminar in Paris we came together in order to draw some conclusions of our four days of informative discussion and meetings in Paris.

Going back to the title of our seminar "French politics and society - towards the VIth republic?" we concluded that the concept of the VIth republic is not this much an issue. The concept brought back into political discourse by Le Pen is contradicted by our conclusion that the Vth Republic is still functioning in a stabile way.

Nevertheless we concluded that there has been much change in French politics lately. As the major field of change we identified the weakness of the left. As a second important factor that changed politics in France we identified societal changes, namely the role of the immigrants, who themselves too changed political discourse and are themselves partners of negotiation.

All participants expressed that the French-German seminar was fruitful and very informative. Especially the possibility of discussions with the French students and their points of view seemed to all an enriching experience both for scientific and personal ends.

SATURDAY, 01ST OF FEBRUARY 2003

14:00 – 16:00

SIGHTSEEING: SENATE / PARK LUXEMBOURG

Saturday afternoon was dedicated to a walk with Prof. Minkenberg to the Senate building. The information about the building shed a little light on some theoretical topics we had discussed before. Afterwards we visited the surrounding Park Luxembourg and the monument of the American-French friendship: the small Statue of Liberty.

This concluding walk gave us great opportunities to exchange opinions about the seminar and to discuss future joint projects.

At the end, we enjoyed a real French lunch: while having crepes and cider all the participants reassured that the seminar in Paris was really worth the trip.