

austerity measures of Prime Minister Barre, will above all benefit those factions in the political parties which put forward a program of social and economic progress. Those factions have a sole representative in the new government with the appointment of René Monory to the key post of Minister of Industry. Monory, a Senator affiliated with the Centrist party, publicly favored debt moratoria for the Third World countries and a return to a gold-based monetary system in an article which appeared on the front page of *Le Monde* last summer.

The composition of the new cabinet will reinforce the position of Barre, a non-party man, who is now ensured enough relative personal weight to be able to counteract to a greater extent President Giscard's Atlanticism. However, Barre is likely to exercise this power only if the Gaullists mount the decisive offensive required to force him to do so. Otherwise, this "apolitical" form of government is precisely what Gaullist leader Michel Debré has repeatedly warned will deliver France into the hands of the Union of the Left of the Socialist and Communist parties or an equally disastrous Giscardian-Socialist coalition.

In an attempt to destroy that option, Debré issued pointed accusations against the Union of the Left at the

Gaullist party (RPR) Central Committee meeting last weekend. He pointed to the "political and ideological links of the Socialist Party with Washington" and added that "certain Communist leaders are not pure either" in this respect. In so doing Debré is aiming at busting up the Union of the Left and attracting the Communist base in particular to an alliance with the Gaullists around a national program for industrial development.

Debré's return to the forefront of the political scene also means that Jacques Chirac, the newly elected mayor of Paris and Chairman of the RPR, may be compelled to abandon his virulent anti-communist line which is to be used to turn France into a battleground for a phony "left" versus "right" scenario.

Debré additionally stated that "the RPR must first of all count on itself. It must organize, attack, propose, and perfect its image. To attack ... is to demonstrate the disunion of the socialist-communist coalition on methods, objectives, men. It is to demonstrate the scandal of their false unity." His accusations were taken up in the Chirac-linked right-wing paper *Valeurs Actuelles* which traced the connection of PCF foreign policy chief Jean Kanapa and Socialist Party zero-growther Michel Rocard with the New York Council on Foreign Relations.

## Showdown With Workers Builds On Production Constriction

After the French municipal elections which resulted in the victory of the Union of the Left, the mood of labor has radically shifted from a depressive stance to one of expectancy, French trade union militants are saying. A number of sharp conflicts in the country have taken on a definite political character as direct challenges to the no-investment policies of the government of President Giscard D'Estaing.

The Elf-Erap oil refinery in the town of Arbès near Bordeaux has been occupied by workers since March 18. At issue is whether the plant will close down or receive state investment funds for modernization. Management states that the company is financially strapped particularly with the government's tight-credit policy. Throughout the Gironde region, strikes and support actions have been going on for occupation.

The head of the Regional Council in Gironde, Chaban Delmas, former Prime Minister under Georges Pompidou and a defeated challenger of Giscard D'Estaing in the 1974 presidential race, has expressed full support for the strikers, and has demanded that the government

allocate the necessary funds for the refinery's modernization. Chaban was joined not only by all the Socialist and Communist Mayors of the area but also by some local Republican Independant elected officials.

The conservative daily *Le Figaro*, which opposes the strike, has nevertheless not hesitated to lay bare the real issue: France, like the European Economic Community as a whole, has agreed to plans, like those in the steel industry, which call for a 30 percent cutback in refinery production and construction.

Meanwhile, dockers shut down the port of Dunkirk following the decision by the steel complex Usinor to ignore standard practices to hire workers of the Communist-controlled CGT union confederation. Dockers are now occupying the entire port and blocking deliveries to all firms in the region. The CGT National Dockers Federation struck nationwide as a warning March 26. Mayor of Dunkirk, Claude Prouvoveur, a member of the Gaullist RPR Party, wrote to Prime Minister Barre asking that he personally intervene and pressure Usinor to open negotiations with the unions.