

international briefs

French Shopkeeper Opponents Potential Fascists

Aug. 26 (IPS) — As a result of the mammoth credit restrictions imposed on the French economy and the consequent wave of small business bankruptcies, each layer of French society hysterically is trying to save its skin amidst the planned chaos. Following weeks of peasant unrest, urban shopkeepers now are venting their anger on the supermarket chains which are driving them quickly out of business.

The small town of Rochefort August 21 was the scene of violent confrontations between members of a

shopkeepers' association, the CID-UANTI, and shareholders of the Leclerc supermarket chain, a cooperative capitalist enterprise which developed throughout the 1950s and 1960s by marginal shopkeepers who wanted to compete in the capitalist food retail world.

Today the Leclerc chain of 150 supermarkets can outsell nearly every small shop in the country. Last year, the Pompidou government passed a special law (the *Loi Royer*) to protect the interests of the small store-owners from expansion of Leclerc and other chains! The law prohibits the introduction of large food chains wherever commerce is still mainly in the hands of small businessmen.

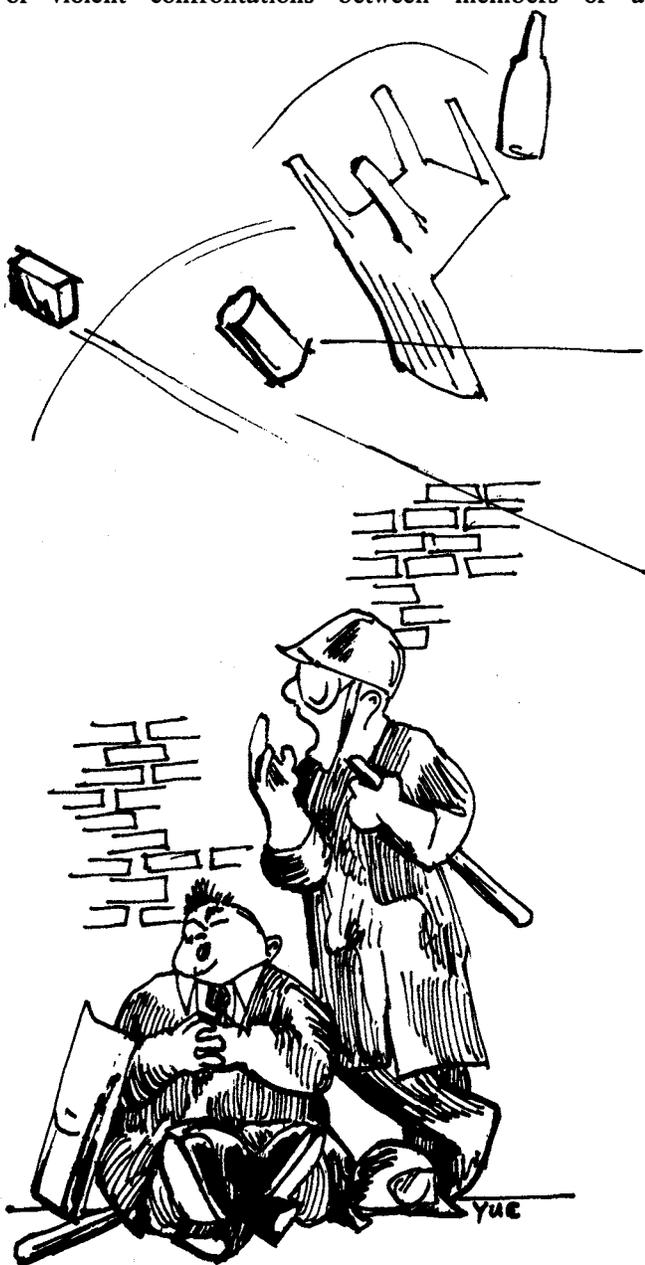
The Leclerc cooperative's decision to violate the law by opening a new supermarket in the small town of Rochefort in western France sparked the August 21 confrontation. Gerard Nicoud, a proto-fascist leader of the CID-UNATI, came to Rochefort with a squad of former gangsters "to protect the traditional shopkeepers." Leclerc, accordingly, gathered a few goons around him to help him "guarantee the right of free enterprise."

The convergence of these forces transformed the usually placid town of Rochefort into "the scene of a western," quipped the August 23 *Le Monde*. Leclerc's troops smashed furniture and destroyed files at the Town Hall and Court of Law, while Nicoud sought direct physical confrontation with Leclerc in front of his market, resulting in serious injuries to both.

Nascent Fascists

Given this display of lunacy by the two camps, it is just a question of time before the accelerating crisis turns them into hostile, yet coherent, factions of the nascent French fascist movement. At this point, only a decisive programmatic intervention by the left — particularly the French Communist Party — can prevent the fascist radicalization of these layers. Unfortunately, there are no indications that the French Communist Party will alter its traditional "support family-size businesses" line.

The Giscard government, is well aware of how the Leclerc-Nicoud feud can help fuel dissension to demoralize the French population and drive them away from meaningful political action. Recent declarations by Commerce and Trades Minister Ansquer, who equivocates and then stresses the necessity of "good



management," will serve only to enrage the desperate pro-Nicoud forces further, while leaving the fundamental problems unresolved.

The general attitude of the French government is

capsulized neatly by the following observation: Just as with the prison riots which swept France in late July, the specially trained CRS riot police arrive conveniently after the fracas was over.

Moscow's Friend at Chase Manhattan

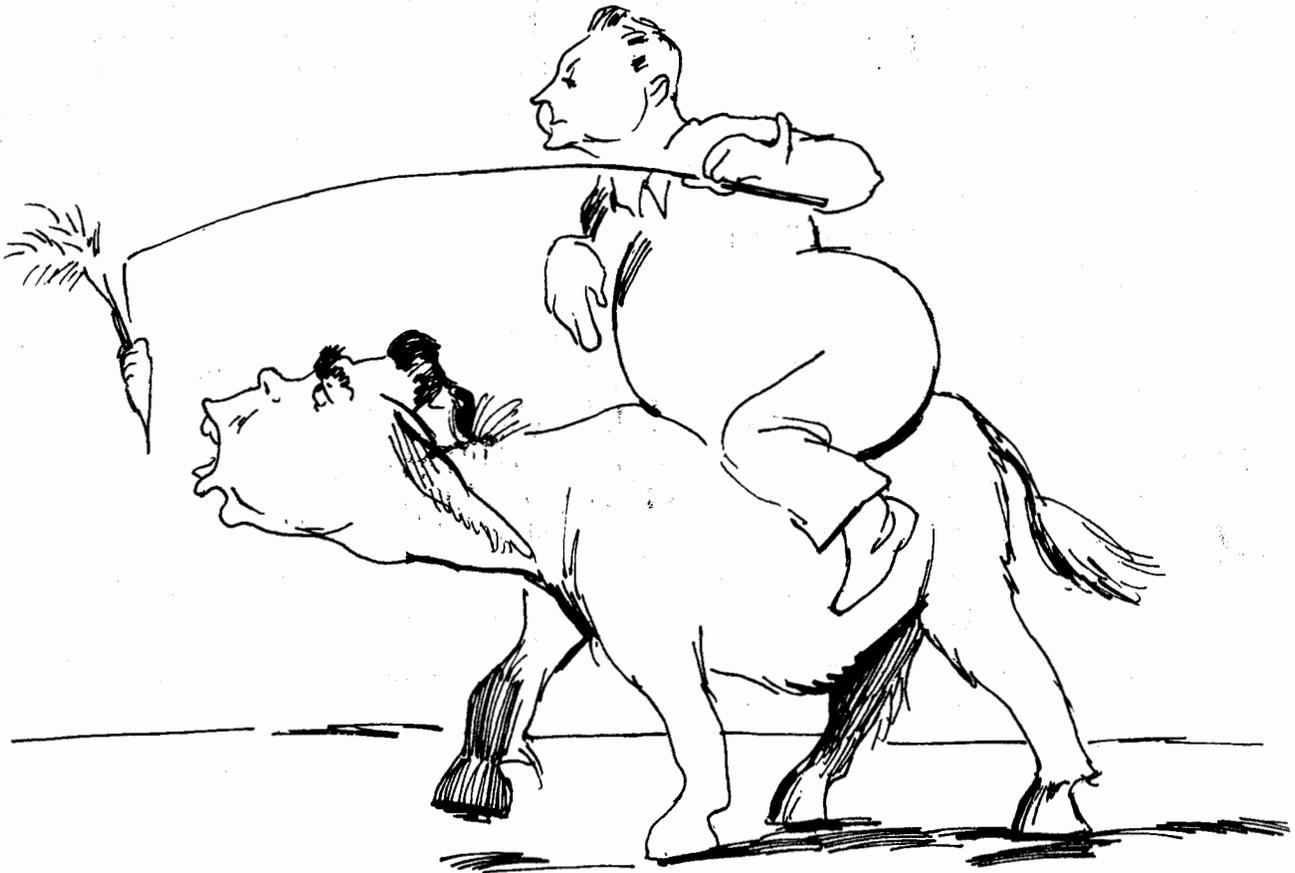
Sept. 2 (IPS) — a *Newsday* dispatch August 16 reports in an article entitled "Chase Man More Envoy than Banker" that Chase Manhattan's representative in Moscow, Alfred Wentworth, is enjoying privileges not usually granted visiting U.S. businessmen. The reason for Wentworth's special status, muses *Newsday*, "may have something to do with David Rockefeller and his family."

IPS previously has reported how David Rockefeller has lulled the Soviet Oblomovs into restful dreams of detente protected by their special friendship with the Rockefeller family.

The article continues: "Rockefeller, Chase's chair-

man, admits that, 'to some extent, the Soviets have believed their own propaganda to the effect that a small group of families, including our own, really runs this country. Therefore, if they're going to have a relationship with the United States, they probably wanted to deal with the people who they thought really had the power.' "

As any real hope of detente has collapsed, the Soviets have seized on this "relationship" with the Rockefellers. The truth, however, is that detente always has been a cover for ever intensifying penetration of the Soviet bloc by Rockefeller capital.



PoltBurro