

# France in Africa, the Mideast

## *A common front for peace and economic progress*

France's policy in the Middle East and Africa centers around two major concerns: to prevent destabilizations by squelching "hot spots" as soon as they occur, and to foster a dialogue on the ways and means to bring those regions out of underdevelopment altogether. This outlook, running counter to the savage policies of London's International Monetary Fund (IMF), has just been reiterated by French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing at his Feb. 15 press conference (see below). Giscard proposed to seek an accord to "strengthen solidarity between Europe, Africa, and the Arab states in terms of security (at least in the tensions that could be avoided) and development." The French leader added that he wanted to discuss organizing such a tripartite summit with Sudanese President Numeiry when he visits Khartoum.

It was during a recent visit to Sudan that France's State Secretary Olivier Stirn proclaimed: "The objective of France's policy is the harmonious development of the totality of the continent." As head of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Numeiry's alliance with France is key to the stability of the continent, as underscored by the joint mapping of tours and deployments to resolve conflicts in the Horn of Africa and the Sahara.

There is an irony to what the French daily *Le Figaro* called "the Common Front" between France and Sudan: the latter is a former British ally and the shift to France as its principal friend and partner in the West coincides with similar shifts in other Anglophile nations of Africa, notably Kenya and Guinea.

The international community watched with a certain amazement when, following the death of Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya's new leader Arap Moi chose Paris and not London as his first stop to make in the West. Last fall also saw the spectacular conversion of Guinea's Sékou Touré to Gaullism, a brilliant demonstration that Giscard's soft-spoken but determined policy of dialogue and trade with all nations can make many converts. A former French colony, Guinea had practically assumed leadership of the anti-Gaullist, pro-British faction in Africa when it delivered a spectacular "no" to then French President de Gaulle's 1960 proposal for a Francophone Community. Sékou Touré's attacks on Great Britain and praise for his former enemy last fall, and then the spectacular reception in Conakry for

Giscard d'Estaing from Dec. 20-22 marked a decisive advance of French diplomacy against the once-great British Empire.

The smaller African countries — both the former Portuguese and British colonies such as the Cape Verde Islands, Liberia, Guinea Bissau or Sierra Leone — are also considering attending for the first time the yearly French-African summit. This year the summit will take place during May in Rwanda.

Significantly, the Soviet outlook on Franco-African policy has shifted from one of hostility to one of critical collaboration, notably in the French effort to pull together a conference on the Horn of Africa. The net result of the French deployment is that British influence is on the wane — save perhaps in the backward tribes manipulated to undermine national governments. African leaders now turn either to Moscow or to Paris for aid in strengthening their governments and their nations politically and economically.

### **Calming the Mideast**

In the Mideast too, French policy is meeting the approbation of the populations and leaders concerned. Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Foreign Minister Khaddoumi visited with his French counterpart Francois-Poncet in Paris on Feb. 21 and stated that he "fully agrees" with what Giscard laid out at his press conference, especially with the French President's suggestion to use the United Nations to foster the cause of a global solution to the Mideast crisis. During the press conference, the French leader clearly rejected the Camp David separate peace approach for the first time, as the Anglophile French weekly *Le Nouvel Observateur* pointedly noted. At present, there is a broad agreement between France, Jordan, and the PLO around the strategy of proposing a comprehensive settlement at the UN Security Council — most likely at Geneva and under the auspices of both the United States and Soviet Union.

### **\$100 billion ECUs?**

But France's vigorous diplomacy is not without its detractors. There is still a fight going on between the proponents of economic growth in the developing sector and Anglophile advisors and politicians who argue in

favor of giving free rein to "free enterprise."

The central point of debate is the economic development program put together by Foreign Trade Minister Jean-Francois Deniau for the presidential political coalition, the Union for French Democracy (UDF).

Deniau's plan exemplifies what the European Monetary System can mean for the developing sector in reversing years of IMF genocide, austerity, and famine in the Third World. It calls for \$100 billion in loans for investment in the developing sector, loans to be denominated in the new European currency, the ECU.

—Garance Phau

## Giscard defines foreign policy

*Below are excerpts from the text of a press conference given by French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing in Paris on Feb. 15*

### **European Monetary System**

I believe that the installation of a European Monetary System (EMS) — allowing for the creation of a zone of monetary stability in Europe — is a basic element in the organization of Europe....

At the Brussels meeting, we agreed upon a number of principles concerning the organization of the EMS....

The system has not been able to go into effect on account of a problem of a different kind: the existence of what are called "monetary compensation amounts" (MCAs). The problem is quite separate from the question of the EMS....

I should like to confirm that we agree on the arrangements arrived at in December for the EMS. We favor the implementation of the EMS as soon as the current difficulties surrounding the MCAs have been cleared up....

### **Nature of future energy crisis**

Iran will not be able to bring its production back to its former level very quickly. In the interests of its own national affairs, it will of course be constrained to resume extracting and selling oil, but before this happens, it is important for the oil-producing countries to try as hard as they can to maintain the level of quantities sold on the market.

It is necessary on this occasion to avoid a confrontation situation. That is why France, by making use of the relations it has maintained and strengthened with the main Arab oil-producing countries, will be in contact

with them over the coming weeks. It will strive to ensure that there is a concerted approach to the problem of oil supplies....

### **The Middle East and Camp David**

The successive events occurring in the Mideast conflict, that is to say, President Sadat's visit to Jerusalem over a year ago and then the Camp David meeting, have constituted a sort of psychological approach to the facts of the problem....

We believe that only an overall solution can solve the problems of the Middle East, that is, a solution that is accepted by all the countries of the region and approved by the international community, and one that provides an answer to all the issues raised, in particular the situation of the Palestinians and the exercise of their rights....

We have to look further ahead. If these talks do not lead to an overall solution, I think it would be better to return to another forum in order to proceed with a careful evaluation of what has been achieved in the different stages of the negotiations....

Where might this assessment take place if not in the United Nations Security Council? I should like to remind you that it was agreed at Camp David that the accords, if reached, would be laid before the Security Council so as to have international endorsement. If this is planned in the event of success, it should also be planned in the event of a failure or an impasse....

### **Europe and Africa**

Now that we're in a new period, a new framework must be sought for relations between Europe, Africa, and, I might say, the Arab states. When I think of the Arab states I'm referring to the members of the Arab League. If you look at a map of the world, you will see that there is a large zone around the Mediterranean which brings together Europe, the Arab states, and Africa.

I think it would be useful for the leaders of these states to meet one day, as others have done.... It would be useful to have an agreement that would strengthen the ties of solidarity between Europe, Africa, and the Arab states both in regard to their security or in any case what they can do to avoid tension between them, and in regard to their contribution to their common problems of development....

I was mindful of this when I accepted the invitation from President Numeiri to go to Khartoum so that there could be a meeting between the president in office of the European Economic Community and the president of the Organization of African Unity. I hope that we will exchange views on the possibility of preparing for a meeting between the states of Europe, Africa, and the Arab League to strengthen their solidarity and contribute to their mutual development....