

## France

# Socialist Mitterrand's victory reverses Giscard's global stabilization policy

by Philip Golub in Paris

Historians, reflecting in the future about the state of European affairs in the 1970s and 1980s, will undoubtedly locate the victory of François Mitterrand in the French presidential election last May as a crucial and dramatic moment of an unfolding destabilization of world affairs begun in the early 1970s. It is certainly no exaggeration to state that Mitterrand's victory, after 23 years of embittered and violent opposition to Gaullism, has shifted the world balance of power by changing the course of the European policy.

At the center of this development is the shift of alliances of the new Socialist regime.

While Gaullism, and then Giscardism, premised the foreign policy commitments of France on the privileged continental relationship between Paris and Bonn, and evolved the idea of an emerging, powerful, and independent Europe, tightly allied to the United States though capable of sovereign action under condition of crisis, the new Socialist regime has brought France back into what Mitterrand himself described not so long ago as a "new entente cordiale" with London.

Far from marking a mere shift of emphasis, this reorientation of French policy marks the end of a long and sustained period of stability and economic growth centered in the Bonn-Paris relationship. In that sense it is more the absence of Giscard d'Estaing than the presence of Mitterrand at the Elysée which critically shifted European affairs. Thus for the first time in this decade West Germany has been relatively isolated within Europe and domestic left socialist opposition to Chancellor Schmidt has developed into the violence of proto-fascist mobs launched against his government. The political and economic power which the coordinated diplomacy of Bonn and Paris wielded no longer assures a coherent positive policy, be it in economic or security affairs. At the same

time the defeat of Giscard intensified the destabilization of the southern European nations: Greece went socialist last month and now represents a factor of destabilization in the Balkans as well as vis-à-vis Turkey; Spain's political system is being torn apart by the twin extremities of the Socialist International and the extreme right-wing nostalgics; Italy, finally, could hardly have contained major civil conflict and maintained the stability of institutions had it not been for the stabilizing presence of the Vatican.

A "domino" collapse process was introduced by the vacuum left open by the collapse of the Franco-German partnership.

The content of the new entente cordiale as envisioned by Mitterrand and British Foreign Minister Lord Carrington can best be described as a revitalization of the "two imperialisms" policy of the British and French of the pre-World War I period and of the more recent "little entente cordiale": which ultimately led to the Franco-British invasion of Suez in 1956. Thus insiders involved in Middle East politics have described the new entente as a division of labor among the two powers, similar to that worked out in 1916 with the Sykes-Picot accords, which dominated post-World War I French and British Middle East policy.

It is not astonishing that Mitterrand would be predisposed to these policies, given his work for British Intelligence during the war which was directed at weakening and containing the resistance movement led by de Gaulle at the time (1943-45). Nor is it accidental or insignificant that France's post-1947 colonial policies, intimately tied to England's, were worked out by French Socialists, many of whom, like Gaston Defferre and Claude Cheysson, are represented today in the Mitterrand government. Mitterrand's Foreign Minister was able to tell an

interviewer recently, without blushing, that French and British policies are strictly coordinated in weekly sessions and constant telephone contact between "his good friend Peter Carrington and himself." Systematic intelligence exchanges have been reintroduced after more than a decade of cold conflict between the two powers, along with an already rapidly proceeding effort at military integration and nuclear weapons cooperation. Mitterrand's pro-English policy has, of course, been complemented by a dramatic worsening of French-German relations. A very strong personal as well as political animosity marks Schmidt's relations to Mitterrand.

French policies toward North Africa and the Middle East have shifted 180 degrees. Whereas Valéry Giscard d'Estaing made systematic efforts to contain and destroy centers of destabilization, the new government is openly supporting them. Thus while Giscard unsuccessfully attempted to receive U.S. approval and support to overthrow Libya's Muammar Qaddafi, Mitterrand has reestablished very close ties to the madman. Mitterrand also approved of the assassination of Anwar Sadat, referencing the "inevitable dialectic of history" while his Foreign Minister boasted "that an obstacle to peace in the Middle East had been removed."

Libya, Iran's mullahs, the pro-Muslim Brotherhood Syrian government—all of these have become the new allies of France in the Middle East. The insurgents in El Salvador, Cuba, the Nicaraguan junta, and the various liberation movements and insurgencies in Latin America have become the privileged discussion partners of Mitterrand in Central and Latin America. There, above all, where France has little to lose, she can afford to stimulate insurgencies. Where Mitterrand believes he and his backers maintain colonial interests, which demand law and order, such insurgencies are not to be seen. He has flattered, paid, and coaxed numbers of French-speaking African leaders into support of his policies.

Not entirely new, these policies all go back to the Fourth Republic and to Vichy. Yet, if anything, the fundamental orientation has hardened, and become much more vehement and ideological.

Mitterrand, who has always verged on bucolic mysticism, sees himself not so much as a conveyor of British influence—however close he may be to London—but as a catalyst of ideological revolution. Not long ago he wrote that he feels "lost in urban France," and more recently on Dec. 10 he declared in a remarkably candid interview to *Le Monde* that he has a sense of mission that France must return to its pastoral sources, and bemoaned "the destruction of rural and pastoral society, where I find my roots, my form of culture."

Socialism and pastoralism are for Mitterrand the same thing: rural life and Malthusian outlooks. From these stem his ideological commitment to "revolutionary" anti-technological movements, be they liberation

movements in Central America or the post-industrial society micro-chips crowd of the industrialized countries. It is not properly astonishing that this man who collaborated for two years with the only modern French fascist experiment, Petainisme, should find ruralism and corporatism as a model. An intense, very personalized hatred of the urban city correlates to the almost instinctive repudiation of the very powerful notion of the nation state proudly advocated by de Gaulle. This mélange of ruralist ideology and the colonial political outlook is the central characteristic of the new Mitterrand regime.

It is this outlook which determines Mitterrand's anglophile leanings, not vice versa. The new alliance with London is simply natural to Mitterrand's devolutionary policy outlook. Today France has returned to the "two imperialisms" policy of the pre-World War I period but this time in socialist disguise.

### The future

To succeed, Mitterrand must destroy and mutilate the institutions of the Fifth Republic and the republican order and must introduce a new social order coherent with his ruralist ideology. French society itself is not fascist—not yet. The vast majority of the population, those who voted for Mitterrand in the hope of raising their living standards or simply the foolish inchoate desire for "change," as well as those who voted against him, do not accept—nor do they understand—the strange mixture of Robespierre, Rousseau, Pétain and Laval that the new President adheres to. The socialist experiment will soon turn sour and behind it stands national socialism: fascist ideology.

He is not mastering the country. He has failed, almost miserably, in his early efforts to crush the opposition and in his crude attempts to purge the institutions. The technological achievements of more than 20 years of prosperity stand against Mitterrand's bucolic goal. He is caught between the promises he made to workers and other groups and the imperious law of world crisis.

He may not survive that paradox. The outcome of the unfolding conflict will largely be determined by the strength of the opposition. Mitterrand will either be forced to back down, repeatedly, and compromise, or a fully consolidated totalitarian socialist machine will emerge to dictate to the country.

The emergence of a strong coherent opposition cannot be expected over the next months. That kind of opposition does not exist and the leader of the RPR (Rassemblement pour la République), Jacques Chirac, who was so instrumental in defeating Giscard, is presently in "peaceful coexistence" with Mitterrand.

Nonetheless most observers estimate that the illusions of the population will die rapidly, probably within the next twelve months. Just as the Fourth Republic died of its bankruptcy, so too will the Mitterrand regime.