

## Report from Paris by Katherine Kanter and Joëlle Leconte

### Mitterrand calls for space-based defense

*The erstwhile opponent of "Star Wars" is moving to strengthen relations with Bonn and Washington.*

**M**aking his first major European address since France took over the presidency of the European Commission, French President François Mitterrand called at The Hague in Holland for a joint European effort to build a manned space station for defense purposes.

Said Mitterrand: "If Europe is capable of launching a manned station into space that will allow her to observe, transmit and therefore counter any possible threat, then she will have made a very great step toward her own defense. . . . A European Community of Space will be, in my opinion, the best response to the military realities of tomorrow."

Indicating that he is thinking in terms of lasers and particle beam systems, Mitterrand stressed: "we must now look beyond nuclear systems if we don't want to be late for a future closer than is generally believed." He also cited the need to develop lasers, advanced electronics, and projectiles traveling at the speed of light.

Reaffirming his adherence to the Atlantic Alliance and to the United States, Mitterrand told those Europeans who are dreaming about an independent European defense that this would be tantamount to leaving Europe unprotected. "In the present state of affairs, Europe is divided between the security which exists already and the security she would like to have. Without any doubt she has to choose the first. The Atlantic Alliance is not about to see itself replaced with a European alliance. This has to do with

the fact that there are no military forces which could substitute for the American arsenal."

According to the daily *Libération* on Feb. 10, "President Reagan wrote to Mitterrand last week asking him to collaborate on the project for a U.S. space station." *Libération* went on to say that the French defense ministry has looked into space-based defense systems and recommended their feasibility.

"Mitterrand goes so far as to evoke the already known capacity of shooting projectiles traveling at the speed of light . . . the Star Wars project so dear to Reagan. . . . The surprise is all the greater since the French were the first to vehemently oppose the space militarization projects of the White House." This sounds like a "180-degree turn in French defense policy."

Mitterrand is expected in the United States on March 21 for a 10-day official visit, during which this proposal for Euro-American cooperation will presumably be brought up.

Mitterrand's formulation are very similar to those used by Socialist André Glucksman in an interview last Saturday Feb. 4

Glucksman, who might be testing the waters for Mitterrand nowadays, has been campaigning for Germany to be able to build nuclear weapons and for a laser-beam defense. When the journalist asked whether Glucksman would go as far as calling for a nuclear defense for Germany, he answered, "Yes. . . . If the Germans have lived

in democracy for 40 years, they are entitled as much as anyone else to choose freely the way in which they intend to defend themselves. . . . The sin of Auschwitz should not be imposed forever, allowing generalizations about the Germans to transform them into the pariahs of the West."

These defense ideas are not coming out of the blue. The French space agency, CNES, thought about evolving the Ariane project (the French space launcher) into a manned shuttle vessel, the Hermes. The project has already been funded at about 1 billion francs per year for the next five years. The United States might offer some help for this project, as the European shuttle would be used for their space station in case of emergency.

The French are discussing with their European colleagues some form of cooperation for a complete European space station with all its services. Because France holds the presidency of the European Commission for the next six months, it is an excellent opportunity for President Mitterrand to give a push to the space station project, a prerequisite for a serious laser beam anti-missiles defensive system.

Mitterrand's speech came amidst a heated debate within France on the question of European security: how to ensure that West Germany will stick to the alliance? It appears that there has been a convergence of views between Mitterrand and Paris mayor Jacques Chirac, the leader of the Gaullist component of the opposition, the RPR. It was Chirac who announced in London on Dec. 2, 1983 that the Federal Republic must be integrated into European defense by means of the beam-weapons effort, because although West Germany is denied the right to build atomic weapons, nothing forbids her to develop and deploy beam weapons.