

## French military cuts fit Anglophile agenda

In raw figures, the new French military budget of 200 billion francs (\$36.7 billion) represents an increase of 1.38% in current francs—that is, an across-the-board cut of 1.5% in constant francs, taking inflation into account. This fits right into the law programming in “austerity” for 1992-94, which anticipated a decrease in the budget, from 3.37% of the Gross National Product in 1991 to 3.1% over this period.

The greatest reductions are in the nuclear programs, which, after the fall of communism, decreased by 11.5%. The land army will see a decrease in its active forces from 280,000 to 225,000. In contrast, there is an increase of 13% in the areas of space and intelligence, such as intelligence-gathering satellites, as well as 6% in research.

Given the severity of the cuts, several voices have been raised, including from Socialist elected officials, denouncing the threat of unemployment in defense production regions. However, there remains, as has been the case since the Berlin Wall came down, a total failure to

define new objectives for the national defense.

There are two questions to be addressed in defense outlays: What should be defended? Against whom? French strategists are avoiding the first question entirely, while for the second, most lean dangerously toward Anglo-American doctrines that say the new threat comes from the underdeveloped South, where nations are “proliferating” everything from nuclear weapons to population.

Both left and right tend increasingly to advocate coming back into the NATO fold. At an International Colloquium organized by Defense Minister Pierre Joxe in October on the new defense priorities, both he and the defense expert for the RPR (neo-Gaullist) party proposed that France become closer to NATO, while rejecting complete reintegration for the moment.

There is a blind spot on the issue of military technologies, paralleling the cuts in the civilian nuclear energy program. Prime Minister Pierre Bérégovoy proclaimed his refusal “to adhere to a project for an anti-missile space shield,” saying that “it represents the unacceptable risk of relaunching the arms race and militarizing space, thereby countering disarmament efforts.” By turning its back on these new technologies, France is mortgaging its military, scientific, and economic future, to the Anglo-Americans.—Christine Bierre

Central Asian nations, the focus of Islam will shift from Arabia to Asia. As a result, the non-Arab Muslim states will now soon be in a position to shift the pro-Arab agenda of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) to one which will reflect the broad spectrum of concerns of the Muslim world.

### Turkey's role resented

Turkey, whose Foreign Minister Cetin promoted the free market and private sector for the Central Asian nations at the ECO meet, came under heavy attack at the seminar. Some participants noted that Turkey's pro-western secularist ideology would counter the influence of Pakistan and Iran in the grouping. Others pointed out that Turkey, facing consistent rejection by the European Community, will be left with little choice but to act responsibly and effectively in the grouping.

But the major problem is the difficulties facing all the nations involved. Member countries like Afghanistan and Tajikistan remain in chaos with little hope of peace returning soon. Others are in a state of semi-paralysis because of the political transitions that are expected to take place shortly.

In addition, while the Central Asian nations may be ready to allow investments, their own economies are still closely tied to Moscow's and the other republics of the former Soviet Union. Nor is there any anchor nation to form the core economic power of the grouping providing capital and skill.

While Turkey and Pakistan have vigorously encouraged

free trade, the free market, and private capital, the Central Asian nations have concentrated on public ownership of the means of production and central planning. Such a policy has left these nations with little wealth of private entrepreneurship, but in social and economic development, they have not done much worse and sometimes better than the others. A comparison of the economies of Tajikistan, the poorest of the Central Asian nations, and Pakistan shows that Tajikistan's per capita income and per capita electricity consumption is significantly higher than that of Pakistan's. And whereas Tajikistan has one doctor per 12,400 people, Pakistan has one for 51,883. While Pakistan is dogged by high poverty and a weak social base despite a reasonable rate of growth, the Central Asian nations, though middle-income countries, are suddenly facing a drastic drop in production due to sudden political and economic dislocation, aided by a complete institutional vacuum.

These difficulties in the economic sphere will be hard to overcome. Moreover, it cannot be ruled out that the Central Asian nations will continue to rely more on the established network of republics of the former Soviet Union and take Russia's help to open up strong economic channels with Europe. At this point, therefore, while it does not seem that the ECO will be a viable economic grouping in the short term, the military and strategic side of this alliance could emerge as a factor in the region very soon.