

# Brits hoke up spy scandals in France

by Christine Bierre

The French weekly *L'Express* published an exposé on Oct. 31, accusing former Defense Minister Charles Hernu of having been an East bloc spy between 1953 and 1963. Hernu died in 1990, and cannot defend himself. The main question is, who has an interest in attacking him, and why?

*L'Express* authors Jérôme Dupuis and Jean Marie Pontaut reveal the existence of a file brought to France during the autumn of 1992 and given to the DST, the agency that deals with espionage on French territory, by an agent of the Romanian secret services, the Securitate, after the collapse of communism in the East.

That file indicates that Hernu had contacts with the secret services of Romania, Bulgaria, and the Soviet Union. Hernu, during that 10-year period, was moving leftward politically, from Radical Party circles to the Socialist Party. The file shows that Hernu sold political reports to those East bloc intelligence organizations. The reports were of a general nature, sometimes including profiles of some of the main political personalities, including President François Mitterrand and former Interior Minister Gaston Defferre. The reports were sold for 2,500-5,000 francs (\$500 to \$1,000) each. The notation, "political information without interest," added to one of them by the Securitate station chief in Paris, suggests that their quality was uneven. After his election to the National Assembly in 1956, Hernu, according to the report, "periodically" received sums ranging from 10,000 to 15,000 francs. In November 1958, the KGB allegedly contributed 300,000 francs to Hernu's election campaign. The last contacts mentioned in the file date from 1963. Upon reception of the file, Jacques Fournet, then DST director, informed Mitterrand and carried out a full investigation on behalf of the President, who decided to classify the information.

After the *L'Express* "revelations" appeared, it became obvious that Dupuis and Pontaut, assisted by elements of the present leadership of the DST, were running a smear operation that was also a warning to politicians who, unlike Hernu, are alive today.

Indeed, while *Le Monde* wrote that the French secret services were convinced of Hernu's guilt, all the officials in the secret services or elsewhere who dealt with this affair in 1992, or who worked with Hernu while he was defense minister (1981-85), immediately made statements on his behalf. Jac-

ques Fournet, DST director during 1990-93, told *Le Monde* of Oct. 31: "After verification, I indicated to the President [Mitterrand] that the documents indeed came from the Eastern intelligence services, but that it was impossible to say whether their content was true. Considering that there was no material proof of those allegations, and that Charles Hernu could no longer defend himself, François Mitterrand indicated to me that there was no reason to rewrite history. The President added that the only thing to do was to classify the file 'defense secret.'" Yves Bonnet, DST director during 1982-85, told *Le Monde* that whatever Hernu might have done between 1953 and 1963, "the attitude of Charles Hernu, as minister of defense, toward the Eastern countries, was irreproachable." Other politicians and security officials expressed a similar view.

## Blackmail

The source of these manipulations became clearer, when *Le Monde* and British newspapers revealed that in the early 1990s, Britain had also given to the French authorities a list of 300 French officials who allegedly worked for the East bloc, which they claim to have received from the Stasi, the East German communist secret service. The British press boasts that as much as 5% of the French diplomatic corps had collaborated with the communist regimes.

The London *Sunday Telegraph* on Nov. 3 went further, attempting to blackmail the French government, threatening a scandal that would bring down all the establishment political parties. "The French establishment is braced, this week, for more spy revelations, amid mounting reports that a currently serving member of President [Jacques] Chirac's inner circle may soon be revealed as one of the 300 senior government and party officials alleged to have spied for the former Soviet Union," wrote the author of the article, entitled "KGB Scandal Closes in on Chirac." A scandal spreading out to 300 people of the entire political spectrum, continues the author, can "only add to the growing impression among the French public that the entire political class in France is now tainted with the charge of being fellow travellers with the Soviet regime. . . . With the left also tarnished by the Hernu revelations, the present mini-crisis can only benefit fringe parties, such as the extreme right National Front of Jean Marie Le Pen."

Why are the British attacking France, even though the Chirac government has made a spectacular turn toward London in recent years? Several crisis areas have erupted recently in the area of foreign relations. France and Britain were at odds in the conflict between the Iraqi government and the rebel Kurds headed by Jalal Talibani, and Britain expressed total disagreement with President Chirac's attempt to play an "Arab card," during his trip to the Mideast this fall. The scandals are evidently intended to make sure Chirac stays in line, as the junior partner of the new "Entente Cordiale."