
France

Mitterrand consolidates foreign-policy switch

by Dana Sloan

Former U.S. SALT negotiator Gerard C. Smith recently complained in the pages of the *International Herald Tribune* that France was marching to a "different drumbeat" than the rest of the West when it came to matters of strategic defense doctrine and military weapons development. Smith, who is a leading spokesman for the conventional arms build-up cabal of Robert McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, and General Bernard Rogers, failed to notice that France's Socialist government under François Mitterrand was breaking from profile on more matters than that.

On domestic and international policy matters, President François Mitterrand is no longer adhering to the script of the Socialist International and its backers, and has fallen increasingly under the influence of an old boys network of political and military advisers whose allegiance is more to the Fifth Republic as an institution than to any particular party or regime.

This turn of events in France has earned Mitterrand the enmity of the leftist ideologues of his own party as well as Anglo-Soviet intelligence networks, and has provoked the activation of all varieties of terrorist groups against the government.

It was to be expected that after the shakeup of the French intelligence services and security apparatus, which began last summer and culminated in the appointment of Admiral Pierre Lacoste to head the DGSE (the French CIA), the next area to be affected would be Africa—where French influence is still strong and intimately associated with the state's intelligence capabilities.

During the first week of December, Minister of Cooperation Jean-Pierre Cot was asked to resign from this post which carries with it large responsibilities for Africa. Cot, who had been Amnesty International's agent of influence in the government, is a close associate of Minister of Planning Michel Rocard (whose presidential ambitions have made him a rival of Mitterrand's). Cot also opposed the policy of transfer of nuclear technology to the developing sector, a policy to which France has recommitted itself, using the convenient pretext of a nuclear contract with South Africa that Mitterrand pledged to fulfill.

In the Middle East, France is playing a mediating role

which, ironically, is serving the better interests of the United States despite many of the actions the U.S. is taking in the region. Mitterrand has committed himself to breaking the diplomatic isolation of Egypt, as well as supplying the nuclear power plants without which Egypt has no chance of surviving economically. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak is very much the target of the same networks that are out to get Mitterrand: Anglo-Soviet forces who are striking a deal to carve up the region and terrorist groups deployed under the cover of Islamic fundamentalism.

President Mitterrand arranged for Mubarak to fly to New Delhi in November for talks with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who is chairing the summit of Non-Aligned nations this March.

Mitterrand went directly from Cairo to New Delhi, where he worked to achieve this diplomatic breakthrough for Egypt. Egyptian government.

More recently, the French President has also played an important role in bringing Egypt back together with its more immediate neighbors in the Middle East, most notably Iraq. Egyptian Foreign Minister Butros Ghali made a special stop in Paris early this month to meet with visiting Iraqi Vice Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, the first time the two countries have met on an official level since the signing of the Camp David treaty, which also marked the beginning of Egypt's exclusion from the Non-Aligned movement. In a remarkable interview given while in Paris, (and apparently not deemed noteworthy by the Anglo-American press), Tariq Aziz told *Le Monde* that he was favorable to PLO-Israeli and Iraqi-Israeli negotiations opening up.

France has singled out three nations, in continuity with the policy of former President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, as requiring special attention: Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Iraq. For historic and economic reasons, Middle East stability depends on these three nations, and all are presently embattled with Khomeini-style forces. France has pledged to keep up the level of its oil imports from Saudi Arabia and Iraq as another means to bolster their regimes.

The extent to which Mitterrand has been "captured" by more traditional and more Gaullist policy-makers is also demonstrated by his refusal to strike a deal with Soviet Prime Minister Yuri Andropov on the many recent disarmament proposals that have just been made, proposals that are not intended to create the conditions for peace, but merely to drive a further wedge between the U.S. and Western Europe while bolstering the greenie and disarmament movements. While the British and West German foreign ministers have each expressed their interest in deal-making, Mitterrand told the French nation on Jan. 2 that "it's not worth dreaming" about the possibility of France reducing its strategic nuclear weapons force.

Provided the proper channels are established between Presidents Mitterrand and Reagan, France could turn out to be one of the best allies of the United States during 1983, a year full of dangers but also unequalled opportunities.