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## Investigative Leads

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# Defferre's purge of law-enforcement agencies triggers resistance in France

by Philip Golub, Wiesbaden Bureau Chief

A series of spectacular developments in an evolving crisis of major proportions between the government of François Mitterrand and the national police force of France has raised questions on the long-term stability and viability of the Socialist regime. The latest episodes indicate that a threshold has been crossed in the internal power struggles affecting the country.

That is the significance of the recent purges undertaken by **Interior Minister Gaston Defferre** and of the vehement reactions from the elite of the French police force which followed Defferre's actions.

In an effort to accelerate the purges which began in early summer 1981 of France's security forces, Defferre, former Mayor of Marseilles, tried to finesse the head of the elite Brigade Criminelle, **Marcel Leclerc**, out of Paris police headquarters, to take over as head of the Judiciary Police of Marseilles. Though nominally a promotion, the move was universally interpreted in Paris as an attempt to remove one of the most efficient police officers from his sensitive criminal investigations post in Paris.

Leclerc, who had been expecting a national promotion to the post of second-in-command of the National Judiciary Police, refused Defferre's ultimative offer. He was backed in his refusal by the head of the Judiciary Police, **François Le Mouel**. The latter, a Socialist, who had been promoted by the new government, resigned March 8 in support of his subordinate, despite their quite different political opinions.

The two events served to catalyze what is now a veritable revolt in the upper echelon of the police hierarchy. On March 10, 300 to 400 leading police inspectors and commissioners of the Judiciary Police gathered at their headquarters to protest against what they called a "witch hunt" launched against their leadership by Defferre. In the course of that assembly, Leclerc's subordinate, an Officer Floss, revealed that the Interior Minister had attempted to coerce Commissioner Leclerc's wife

into forcing him to accept the Minister's "offer." According to Floss, Defferre met with Leclerc's wife alone, and warned her that she and her family would bear the consequences of a refusal by her husband.

The Paris police leadership sees in this affair an effort to destroy the best security forces in the country for reasons which go beyond mere political party differences. Le Mouel's resignation is most intriguing in that it evidences a conflict which bypasses Socialist-opposition divisions.

### Dismantling of French law-enforcement

Answers to the questions raised by this affair are probably to be found in and around Marseilles and in the pattern of scandals, purges, and Mafia warfare which are proliferating in Socialist France. Going beyond day to day events, patterns emerge which deserve investigation.

1) Not long ago, as part of the same dismantling of the Paris police as the Leclerc affair, a leading police officer, **Lucien Aimé Blanc**, was transferred to the city of Lille.

Aimé Blanc, unquestionably one of the best anti-Mafia fighters in France, had been along with Leclerc, one of the key officers in the dismantling of the "French Connection" in the early 1970s. Specializing in the struggle against the Mafia and the drug traffic, Aimé Blanc was part of a group of officers who had made France's police force one of the best in the world.

2) **Maurice Bouvier**, former head of the Judiciary Police and the central figure in the crackdown on the assassination apparatus which was directed at Charles de Gaulle, suffered the same fate as Blanc and Leclerc under Mitterrand's regime.

3) François Le Mouel, while closely tied to the Socialist Party, had been a leading figure with Aimé Blanc in the destruction of the **French Connection**.

Previous to his promotion to head up the Judiciary Police (replacing Bouvier), he had led the Brigade des Stupefiants, the equivalent of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

4) Marcel Leclerc and his Brigade Criminelle had been responsible for many successes against organized crime, particularly in the hunting down of the notorious—and protected—criminals Mesrine and Carlier in 1975, in a series of operations against the heroin Mafia Zammour family. Most recently, Leclerc had been the central investigator in charge of the investigation into the assassination of Mafia boss **Marcel Francisci**, who was professionally shot down Jan. 15 in Paris.

5) The murder of Francisci is one of the major pieces of the puzzle. Francisci, denounced in 1970 by DEA officer Jack Kiusack as the kingpin of the French Connection, had in recent years been publicly associated with the gambling industry in Marseilles, Nice, and Paris. Affiliated for years with the nominally Gaullist party of Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac, the **RPR**, as a local official in Corsica, Francisci however maintained continuous relations to the Socialist Party via its Marseilles and Corsican apparatus. Sometimes conflicting, sometimes friendly, these were nominally “business relations.”

Very significant evidence has recently emerged which proves that Francisci just before his death had contacted two top-level Socialist lawyers, **Maître Dumas** in Paris and **Maître Lombard** in Marseilles, asking them to mediate contacts for him to Defferre and the government. This apparently strange behavior for an RPR faithful was certainly explicable within the rules of the game in Marseilles and Corsica. This evidence was contained in tapes found on Francisci after the murder. Following seizure of the tapes by the Brigade Criminelle, they were passed on to a Judge Joly, who proceeded to a search of both Dumas’s and Lombard’s offices in Marseilles. Dumas, a long-standing friend and associate of François Mitterrand, is now a Socialist Party Deputy, while Lombard is a close friend of Defferre. Although Joly is not known for his sympathy to the regime, he let it be known that further evidence was found in Lombard’s office on Francisci’s penultimate contacts with the Socialists.

6) Last summer the left-leaning Marseilles **Judge Michel** was assassinated. Revelations at the time indicated that Michel was working in close liaison with Italian judges responsible for the recent successes in the fight against terrorism and the dope Mafia. Michel was working on breaking down the Marseilles-Corsican side of the heroin connection, which has its Sicilian counterpart. Recently, Minister Defferre affirmed that Marseilles had nothing to do with the entire matter, while the police contended the contrary. It is worth noting here that the aforementioned Police Commissioner Lu-

cien Aimé Blanc had trained Judge Michel. Recent police leaks indicate that the **Zampas**, a Mafia family working both the Italian and French sides of the heroin trade, commissioned the murder.

7) In early March, the head of the Marseilles social security fund committed suicide after being subjected to fierce attack by the government and labor unions. The man, Lucet, was a known sympathizer if not a member of the **Service Action Civique (SAC)**, the extreme right-wing paramilitary organization whose head is a member of the RPR.

8) Lastly, the RPR and other opposition parties revealed major electoral frauds committed over the past years by the Socialists in the city of Marseilles. This led to threats and counter-threats, including a now-famous warning by Defferre that if the RPR continued its investigations, he would reciprocate in Paris which could implicate Jacques Chirac.

### Internal warfare

The purges of the Paris police are thus part of a much broader pattern of intensifying internal warfare, most of it quite covert. While internal “police wars” (la guerre des police) continuously troubled Presidents de Gaulle, Pompidou, and Giscard, the essential homogeneity of the Paris police leadership kept conflict within definite limits. The Socialist victory and, perhaps even more important, the appointment of Defferre as Interior Minister, has set a match to a barrel of powder. The purging of the most senior police officers, the dismantling of the anti-dope Mafia leadership, and the reorganization of the secret services has become a much more violent process than Jimmy Carter’s blinding of the U.S. intelligence community in 1977.

Some analysts have suggested that the basic line of division today in this underground game is between the SAC and Defferre. Although it is the RPR which defeated Valéry Giscard d’Estaing and were tactically allied to the Socialists in doing that, RPR leaders like **Charles Pasqua**, a Corsican who is known for using underhanded methods, are now speaking of “an incubating civil war in France.” The days of tactical alliances have gone.

More than ever the Socialist government is leading France towards increasing chaos and division. The Socialist-Communist coalition government is torn from within in two directions: one within the Socialist Party itself and secondly between Communists and Socialists.

Leading government officials in private admit that soon they will be forced to resort to thoroughgoing austerity. The international economic crisis will only make things worse and will force a major crisis between Communists and Socialists.

The present crisis in the French national police is but the first act of a widening national crisis.