
FRANCE

Defense minister: 'acquire laser defense'

French Defense Minister Charles Hernu, in response to an interrogatory from a parliamentarian on beam weapons on Nov. 4, delivered a ten-minute briefing to the French National Assembly on the feasibility of beam anti-ballistic missile technologies, including the fact that France is "spending a lot in research and development in this area." This is a major break with the French government's official skepticism or even hostility on the issue of ABM defense. It is the first admission from any European government that a domestic beam-weapons research program is vigorously underway.

Hernu thanked parliamentarian Jean Brocard of the Union Pour la Democratie Française (UDF) for asking what he described as an extremely important question. President Reagan has committed the United States to develop these defensive weapons, and intends to have "a full-fledged system by the year 2000, 2001, 2002 or 2003," Hernu declared. "In France as well, we are thinking about such weapons and are working on them." Hernu added that, when it comes to laser research, "we occupy a more than honorable rank in this field."

The official transcript of Hernu's remarks, published in *Le Journal Officiel* and translated below, shortened and muted some of these more enthusiastic overtones in his statement, conveying a more cautious yet unmistakable impression. The beams issue is such a hot potato in France that the government still hesitates to commit itself unequivocally in print to a policy which it nevertheless feels compelled to adopt.

Hernu's statement leaks into the public purview what is otherwise a raging battle behind the scenes, cutting across all party lines and piercing to the core of France's national identity. France's independent nuclear deterrent, the *force de frappe*, hallmark of the Gaullist era, will become obsolete unless linked to an ABM program which could protect it. The overwhelming Soviet military superiority in the European theater, and the evident Soviet intention to push the United States to the brink of thermonuclear war, point up the fact that "deterrence" has only brought the world to the point at which a war which the West would lose is more likely, since prior to President Reagan's beam-weapon policy an-

nouncement, the West had no doctrine for defense or for war-fighting as such. The Soviet aggressiveness, plus the development of ABM capabilities by the United States and the Soviet Union, have thrown French military doctrine into the greatest crisis since Hitler's march into Paris.

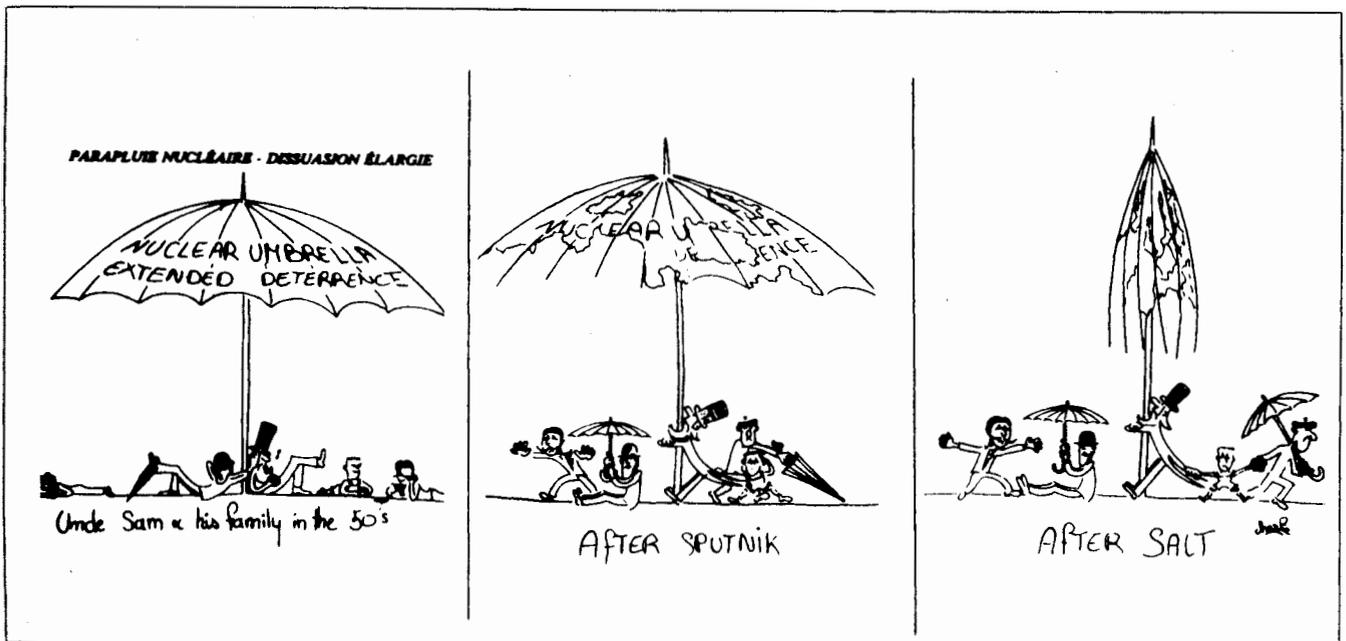
Thus France confronts a choice: Join with the United States and the rest of Western Europe in the development of an effective crash beam weapons program, or follow the option of Britain's Lord Carrington for decoupling Europe from the United States and forging a Franco-British axis of "deterrence." A decoupled Europe, with a "Finlandized" Germany at its heart, would make World War III almost inevitable. And contrary to the illusions of some French generals who are still fighting the last war in their minds, the Soviets would not stop at the Rhine.

Remobilization of the Resistance

Colonel (ret.) Marc Geneste, known as the father of the French neutron bomb, and currently an engineer with the Commissariat à l'Energie Atomique, told a New York audience on Nov. 1 that initial French grumbling about the beam weapon policy would surely give way, since there is no way that France would sit back and allow the superpowers to outdistance it. Geneste described his own former work on the French neutron bomb, which proceeded in greatest secrecy while the government was officially protesting against mooted U.S. deployment of the weapon and exclaiming that France would never consider such a dreadful thing. Another prominent French military figure concurred: "It is impossible to stop beam weapons now, no matter how hard Henry Kissinger tries."

Former leaders of the French wartime Resistance are among the most enthusiastic supporters of the beam policy. Many of them have joined the work of a new organization, La France et son Armée (France and its Army), which is circulating a call in support of President Reagan's ABM policy, and organizing conferences around the country on this issue. Signers include Colonel Geneste and Gen. Revault d'Allonnes (of the Compagnon de la Libération, the elite organization of former close associates of Gen. Charles de Gaulle), both featured speakers at *EIR*'s conference on beam weapons in Bonn Oct. 5 (see *EIR*, Nov. 8); renowned Resistance leader Marie Madeleine Fourcade; Henri Ziegler, honorary chairman of the aerospace firms Aerospatiale and Airbus Industrie; Gen. Jacques Andrieux, member of the Compagnon de la Libération, retired Air Force general; Gen. Jean Thiry, former General Staff commander for special weapons, former director of the nuclear test center at Reggane; Claude Hettier de Boislambert, postwar French military governor of the German state of Rheinland-Pfalz, honorary chancellor of the Ordre de la Libération and president of the National Committee of Recipients of Resistance Medals; and Mme. la Marechale Leclerc, widow of the commander of the tank division that liberated Paris.

These Resistance fighters, some of whom were personally close to General de Gaulle, remember the wartime alli-



The U.S. nuclear umbrella as depicted in *Echec à la guerre: la bombe à neutrons*, by Samuel T. Cohen and Marc Geneste.

ance with the United States against Nazism, and have not shaped their political views under the postwar tutelage of Henry Kissinger, Lord Carrington, and the “deterrence” doctrine. For them, Kissinger’s “deterrence” is the modern-day equivalent of the Maginot Line doctrine which led to France’s occupation by the Nazis.

Jacques Chirac, chairman of the Rassemblement pour la République (RPR—the Gaullist party), is known to be under intense pressure from these Gaullists to come out openly for beam-weapon defense. While he has hitherto confined himself in public to hints about “new ideas for defense,” Chirac is nonetheless taking a strong stand against the “decouplers” and “Finlandizers.”

In two visits to the Federal Republic of Germany this fall, he has sought to shore up Germany’s commitment to the West and to the United States. Speaking at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Bonn in October, Chirac declared that while Germany is forbidden to develop nuclear weapons, she could take more responsibility in other aspects of military cooperation. The role of the United States is crucial for the defense of Europe, he said, and “anything which decouples goes in the wrong direction.” In a radio interview Oct. 18, Chirac added that “it is impossible to insure nuclear deterrence through the British and the French only. . . . Germany and France must unify their policies, their goals, and their means, and they must discuss every security issue.”

Chirac was denounced by Socialist Party left-winger Jean Pierre Chevenement, an advocate of a Franco-British security alliance, and by Socialist Party foreign affairs spokesman Jacques Hutzinger. Chirac “is wrong to say that France and Britain could not insure the defense of Europe,” Chevenement charged. “This is the end of Gaullism.” Chevenement

particularly objected to Chirac’s insistence that Europe could not be defended without the United States.

Chevenement’s views found backing from unexpected quarters. Gen. Pierre Gallois, a top Gaullist nuclear strategist, created a national sensation in an interview to the Spanish newspaper *Vanguardia* published on Oct. 17, in which he advocated that Germany should be abandoned to the Russians. What should France do if Germany is attacked? he was asked. General Gallois replied: “Not move an inch. Stay still. Give the Soviets time to solve the German problem while we preserve France. I would rather have the Soviet army on the French borders than to allow the destruction of France. . . . The only solution is that Britain and France have their own forces to respond in a nuclear way to a hypothetical Soviet attack.”

A French Pearl Harbor?

The crises in Lebanon and Grenada during the last weeks have heightened the strategic political battle in France, with an upsurge of patriotism not unlike that occurring in the United States. When over 200 U.S. Marines were killed in Lebanon in a kamikaze raid by a Muslim fanatic, 100 Frenchmen also died in a similar blast across town. As in the United States, French authorities report an increase in youthful enrollment in the armed forces since the Lebanon disaster. This “Pearl Harbor” response in the French population could affect the strategic debate in a dramatic way.

When French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson, an advocate of the Carrington-Kissinger appeasement faction, complained about the U.S. invasion of Grenada Oct. 26, he was roundly denounced in *Le Figaro* by columnist Jacques-Francillon. “To allow the Soviet Union to install, with the

help of Cuban mercenaries, a military base on the island of Grenada, would have been for the U.S. president to commit a fault that history would never have forgiven him for," he wrote—adding that had the French government acted with the same determination against Libyan dictator Qaddafi in Chad, that unfortunate country would not be partitioned at the present time.

"Only the weak fly in the face of danger," the article continued. "In 1962, when John Kennedy was challenged by Khrushchev in the Cuban crisis, he did not back down. Do the French people remember today that General de Gaulle, even though he had plenty of resentment of Washington, was the first foreign head of state to side publicly with America."

A similar article appeared in *Le Quotidien de Paris* by Philippe Tesson, who wrote that "those who have snivelled about American weakness, those who have doubted the American shield, are today flocking to condemn the first gesture of firmness the U.S. has made in ten years. . . . At Munich, Chamberlain evoked the fate of Czechoslovakia, explaining to the British parliament that Great Britain would not fight for foreigners, so far away from London, of whom nothing was known. We didn't fight, but we got a war anyway. And without the Americans, we would have lost it."

DOCUMENTATION:

Hernu briefs the National Assembly

Parliamentary deputy Jean Brocard submitted an official interrogatory to French Defense Minister Charles Hernu Nov. 4 in the National Assembly, which we excerpt here, followed by the Minister's answer in full. The text is taken from the official journal of the French parliament, where it was published in a somewhat altered form.

Brocard: Mr. Minister, the projected national defense budget does not mention at any point directed-energy weapons. But it appears that this kind of weapon is now being developed in the Soviet Union and in the United States. . . .

By destroying enemy missiles in flight, without provoking the explosion of their nuclear warheads, these weapons will change the strategic order in which we have lived since the beginning of the 1960s. Instead of "Mutual Assured Destruction" there will be a "Mutual Assured Survival" based on defensive deterrence.

Do you seriously believe, Mr. Minister, that France alone

could prevent the development of anti-missile and anti-satellite weapons by both superpowers? Do you consider that it would in any way serve the interest of France to have a technological freeze in this military domain, which would have an immediate negative effect on our overall industrial development?

Would it not be preferable to immediately engage in a national program for the deployment of these weapons? Should we not provide right away for the defense of our cities and our military sites—the Plateau d'Albion and the Ile Longue—which are now vulnerable to the Soviet SS-20, by undertaking the study, research and production of laser cannons? Is it not by protecting our *force de frappe* with directed-energy weapons that we will give it full credibility?

I clearly understand, Mr. Minister, that the government may not wish to go into long explanations about classified secret efforts. But doesn't it appear necessary to affirm our will and our commitment to this domain of arms-related technological development, when faced with the bellicosity demonstrated by the Soviet Union? Have you not indicated this afternoon that 9,800 Soviet warheads could reach our national territory?

In short, it appears that directed-energy weapons, for both the tactical and strategical domains, are uniquely able to ensure the future of our defense, and to restore credibility to our *force de frappe* by protecting the sites where it is deployed.

You announced to us this afternoon, Mr. Minister, that the government research budget is 19.7 billion francs in program authorization and 17.6 billion in payment credits. Such amounts ought to allow us to take on or to continue research on directed-energy weapons, research whose spinoff effects will be felt on the national economy.

As you have said, we must prepare for the future. So this question must be part of a debate on overall strategy. When will the government organize such a debate? Doesn't the government think that, given its importance, this debate should be on the agenda of our assembly as soon as possible, just as the *force de frappe* was debated in its time?

Hernu: Mr. Deputy, everyone knows that what we call by the collective name of "directed-energy weapons" are weapons which are still partially in the domain of speculation. They use a highly concentrated beam, a thin, very energy-dense beam, which is expected to produce destructive mechanical effects on the target it is directed against.

Two different kinds of beams can be envisaged which could produce the desired effects. One can use either light particles, i.e., photons, produced by "power" lasers, or elementary particles of matter—i.e., electrons, protons or neutrons to which a very strong energy pulse is imparted by means of powerful accelerators, to project the destructive beam in a precise direction.

The denser the atmosphere between the generator and the target, the greater the perturbation of the beams' propagation will be. This phenomenon must be taken into account in the

ongoing research. This is the reason why the presently foreseen applications concern either systems operating in the atmosphere, i.e., with a very short range, or systems operating in a vacuum, i.e., with a much greater range, but not allowing for any impurity between the target and the particle accelerator. It is thus not so simple!

When President Reagan announced last spring, in a futuristic declaration which buried nuclear deterrence, that these systems could be mounted on satellites, and be used in flight to destroy either ballistic missiles or their warheads, I devoted new attention, as you did Mr. Deputy, to everything which was written on the subject. President Reagan based himself on very sophisticated studies and research, which I examined with curiosity. However the Americans expect to test only some components of these systems and not the entirety, as President Reagan's declaration seemed to imply.

You are thus quite premature, Mr. Deputy, when you already point to the eventual deployment of these energy-directed weapons. In fact, the best American specialists don't foresee this occurring before the year 2000. Without betraying a secret, I can indicate that we have, however, some contacts with the Americans on this issue.

Don't let us take the risk—in this I join with Mr. Debré [Gaullist leader Michel Debré—ed.]—of relinquishing the benefit of nuclear deterrence for the sake of a speculative system whose installation is as yet uncertain.

It is normal that this subject be debated and you are perfectly right. However these debates are more suitable at colloquia, university or scientific meetings. I agree to organize, one day, a colloquium on directed-energy weapons, but it is not yet time to plan for a legislative debate.

Concerning the Soviet Union, our information is less complete. Nevertheless it seems that this country is presently making quite a substantial effort in this domain, if one can judge from its statistics on studies and research. I am sorry not to be able to give you more information on what is going on in the Soviet Union.

As far as the French effort is concerned, it bears on the acquisition of the technology of power lasers and the study of their effects.

Without wanting to reveal too much about it, I can nevertheless tell you that we occupy a more than honorable rank in this field, and that military credits play a preponderant role in the development of this new technology. A weekly magazine, *Les Nouvelles*, dedicated a remarkable technical study to this subject 15 days ago, and was pleased to point out that the development of this new technology was only possible in France because of research credits granted by the defense ministry. It is obvious that the defense ministry must now think of defining passive means of protecting our missiles against the effects of the laser, in spite of the admittedly hypothetical nature of the threat. However, we must think about it not in such a way that energy-directed weapons replace deterrence, but so that the latter is not threatened by the former.

WEST GERMANY

Genscher tries to halt ABM debate

by George Gregory

A few weeks ago the West German Bundestag held the first in a series of internal discussion seminars on the subject of "alternatives to present NATO strategy." The bulk of the parliamentary discussion was reportedly devoted to variations on the theme sung by former U.S. secretary of Defense, Robert Strange McNamara, during his tour of the Federal Republic in October: that the present NATO doctrine of "flexible response" is no longer credible, and therefore the chief weight of European efforts must be to develop conventional armaments capabilities for the purpose of direct defense against the overwhelming conventional superiority of the Warsaw Pact.

In the middle of the debate, one Christian Democratic deputy suggested that beam-weapon antimissile defense systems should also be included in such a discussion of "alternatives," particularly in light of the U.S. commitment to develop and deploy such systems, and the offer of President Reagan to develop beam weapon defenses directly for defense of Western Europe.

The suggestion of the deputy was quashed by none other than Gen. Wolfgang Altenburg, general inspector of the West German Armed Forces, who insisted that even a closed-door debate of parliamentarians was not the proper place to discuss beam weapons, nor the alternative strategic regime of "Mutually Assured Survival."

That incident is typical of the rear-guard effort of the Bonn government to cork the momentum of debate and deliberation occurring in professional military and military policy circles on direct Western European work on developing beam-weapon anti-missile defenses. There has, nevertheless, been widespread media coverage here of the recommendations of the Fletcher Commission to the President on beam weapons, reports of Pentagon estimates that the Soviet Union is engaged in a beam-weapon development program equivalent to \$30-\$50 billion annually (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Oct. 25), coming in the wake of the *EIR* seminar "Beam Weapons: The Strategic Implications for Western Europe," in Bonn on Oct. 5. These developments have assured that many inside