

Report from Paris by Mary Lalevée

Behind the French-Soviet rapprochement

It involves Lebanon, Syria, and Iranian terror. Some French Socialists do not approve.

Insiders on the editorial board of the French daily *Le Monde* have been talking a lot lately about the French efforts to make their own deal with the Soviet Union, especially over Lebanon. "There will be a split between the United States and France on the Middle East," prophesied one such insider, "Mitterrand is trying to stay in Lebanon after Gemayel goes. The problem is how to get rid of Gemayel."

Such a French "deal" would explain President Mitterrand's otherwise inexplicable remarks on French television Feb. 12, when he praised the Shi'ite militias who had just driven Lebanese army forces out of half the capital Beirut, for their "great sense of responsibility." "There are cordial relations between us," he said. A few days previously, Jacques Huntzinger, head of foreign relations for the French Socialist Party, had endorsed a statement by the Shi'ites' ally, Druze leader Walid Jumblatt, calling for Gemayel "to commit suicide," a barely disguised threat to assassinate the Lebanese President. Huntzinger was quoted saying that while the remarks of Jumblatt—who is vice-president of the Socialist International—may have been a little extreme, he agreed that Gemayel had to go.

A front page story in *Le Monde* dated Feb. 13, entitled "M. Mitterrand's Trial Balloon," reported that Mitterrand made a declaration during his visit to Greece, stressing the "common struggles" of the French and Soviet peoples, and Mitterrand's remarks about the late Yuri Andropov

were also remarkably warm. "I never knew Yuri Andropov personally," he said, but many signs indicate a personality that has always appeared to me to be very strong, which can constitute an eventual factor of stability in the conduct of public affairs, of personal authority, of knowledge of dosiers and of true culture."

Le Monde journalist Jacques Amalric comments that Mitterrand is continuing a process of new "openings" to the Soviet Union that began towards the end of 1983. The visit to France by Soviet Deputy Premier I. V. Arkhipov Jan. 27-31, and the signing of a huge \$1.2 billion trade deal between the two countries is part of this deal.

"France has never said no to anyone," commented another veteran foreign-policy observer. He said that the French would swing to whichever power was the strongest, and right now that is the British—and the Soviets, "who make long term plans. The change of a leader does not make any difference to them. Their policy is like a boa constrictor—very long term, very slow, but very thorough!"

Another indication of the French "deal" with the Soviets is the apparent impunity with which Iranian—and other—terrorists operate on French soil. The assassination of Iranian exile leader Gen. Gholam Ali Oveissi and his brother in Paris Feb. 7, followed one day later by the murder of the ambassador of the United Arab Emirates led to conclusions being drawn in some quarters that "There has been a deal

between Iran and the French. The Iranians will leave French interests alone in exchange for freedom of movement in France, and for France not delivering certain weapons to Iraq," as one Arab source in London commented after the killings.

Not everyone in France is happy with the way French policy is going. The head of the Association of Socialist Human Rights, M. Pierre Percis, declared in a message to the Socialist Party leadership that he was "scandalized by the call for the murder of President Gemayel launched by Walid Jumblatt." The association called for "an urgent meeting of the Socialist International to discuss this serious affair." If "The exclusion of Jumblatt is not decided upon, the respectability of the members of the Socialist International would be seriously compromised," the message stated.

Le Monde also carried an exposé of a little-known organization fighting against President Gemayel on behalf of the Syrians and the Soviets showing that not all are happy with France's friendship with the Nazi-run state of Syria. The article on the Syrian Popular Party, now named the Syrian National Socialist Party (SNSP), reports that this movement of self-avowed Nazis, now "left-wing" and working with the militarist, anti-Semitic Lebanese Communist Party is calling for the creation of a "Natural Syria," which would include Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine (including Israel), Iraq, Kuwait, and Cyprus. The originator of this idea is none other than a Belgian Jesuit, one Henri Lammens, according to the journalist J.-P. Peroncel-Hugez. Peroncel-Hugez describes the SNSP as "one of the many instruments of Syrian penetration of Lebanon." What is France doing working with people like this, is the unasked question in the article.