

Report from Paris by Laurent Rosenfeld

Mitterrand's anti-American tilt

The Elysée's campaign against "space weapons" is placing France in Europe's "Neville Chamberlain" camp.

Recent pronouncements on foreign policy and defense by top French government spokesmen are an alarming indication of how far France is being pushed toward alignment with the "independent Europe" faction of Britain's Lord Carrington, the advocates of appeasement of the Soviet Union.

The government of President François Mitterrand and Prime Minister Laurent Fabius has emerged as one of the most outspoken Western adversaries of the "militarization of space"—that is, the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), which is crucial to the defense of the Western alliance. While what Mitterrand and Fabius are doing is not necessarily the same thing as what they are saying (since, for example, France has its own intensive program for research in antiballistic-missile defense), their statements nevertheless give cause for concern.

Bernard Vernier-Palliez, the outgoing French ambassador in Washington, expressed "reservations" about the SDI in an interview to the *Washington Post* published on Oct. 30. As concerns nuclear weapons and the U.S. deployment of Pershing II and cruise missiles in Europe, he said, "Up to now Paris and Washington have seen eye to eye." But the possibility of replacing the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction (which relies on offensive nuclear forces) with Mutually Assured Survival—as the new U.S. doctrine, which emphasizes *defense*, would do—is another matter, he said. "It would be dangerous to end reliance

on offensive systems. This is something that would concern us." Heads of state, he said, will be much more cautious if there is a risk of escalation to nuclear conflict as a result of their actions. What Vernier-Palliez neglected to mention is that a defense shield protecting both superpowers would make nuclear weapons obsolete!

The ambassador's remarks come in the context of a growing French campaign against "space weapons." On Oct. 17, in a declaration made on the occasion of Hungarian leader János Kadar's visit to Paris, President Mitterrand raised "the problem of the arms race" and stated his wish to see "space weapons stay at the lowest possible level."

By opposing the United States on this most crucial issue of defense policy, Mitterrand effectively aligns himself with the "decoupling" faction of Lord Carrington, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, et al., who are seeking to build up an illusory "independent European defense" and reach a "New Yalta" accommodation with the Soviet Union. In the real world, this would deliver France, along with the rest of Europe, into the Soviet sphere of influence. Although Mitterrand sent a warm telegram of congratulations to President Reagan upon the latter's election victory, France's diplomatic moves are hardly bolstering U.S.-European ties.

At the end of October, Mitterrand went to London to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Entente Cordiale,

the 1904 colonial pact by which France and Britain divided up what is today called the Third World into spheres of imperial influence—a treaty that helped create the conditions for World War I. Reliable sources said that the meeting between the French President and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was rather stormy and tense because Mitterrand was trying to shift Thatcher's emphasis away from the Anglo-American connection and towards closer collaboration with Europe.

On various recent occasions, such as the Western European Union meeting in Rome on Oct. 26 and at a summit meeting between Mitterrand and West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, French officials have been pushing for a strong European defense, trying to standardize the Western European military hardware of the 1990s. This includes proposals for the joint construction of a jet fighter by West Germany, France, Britain, Italy, and other European countries, as well as construction of a common main battle tank.

This standardization is certainly necessary, but the idea of decoupling Europe and the United States seems to be always lurking behind these schemes.

Mitterrand's efforts have won the enthusiastic support of Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, who declared in the first week of November: "The Soviet Union and France should cooperate in order to put international relations back on the road of détente." Gromyko stressed that there are "some convergences in the positions of the two countries, including on the question of preventing the militarization of space, chemical weapons, and nuclear non-proliferation." On these questions, Gromyko saw "the possibility of parallel action by Paris and Moscow."