

Report from Paris by Philip Golub

The wrong man is sacrificed

The defense minister has fallen victim to those leftist elements in government who have aligned with the enemies of France.

French Defense Minister Charles Hernu and Adm. Pierre LaCoste, head of French intelligence (DGSE), were forced to resign Sept. 20, in the aftermath of an unsubstantiated report in the newspaper *Le Monde*, that a French secret service team of two combat divers had planted two mines on the hull of the Greenpeace anti-nuclear protest ship Rainbow Warrior, which sank in a harbor in New Zealand in August.

The Rainbow Warrior was to have sailed into the area of French underground nuclear testing at Mururoa Atoll, but was sunk before it could do so.

Le Monde said the alleged secret-service action was taken on orders of Hernu and top military officials.

According to knowledgeable sources in France, Hernu has now been kicked out by French President François Mitterrand as a matter of "damage control." These sources estimate that Mitterrand panicked, under intense political pressure from the KGB lobby in his government, particularly from circles around Interior Minister Pierre Joxe.

The sources say that it was Joxe who leaked the scandal material to the newspapers, briefing correspondent Edwy Pelel, formerly a radical Trotskyist and member of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire. A left-wing Socialist leader, Joxe is very close to both Régis Debray, the former adviser to the President who is an agent of Soviet influence, and to President Mitterrand's wife. Her political opinions are not necessarily those of the President.

The Rainbow Warrior affair is now rapidly assuming the proportions of Watergate—or as pundits here say, "under-Watergate."

Le Monde's new "revelations" came only a few days after Mitterrand's trip to the test site at Mururoa, where he declared that the tests will continue. In the course of his trip, he pointed out that the anti-nuclear propaganda in the South Pacific is astonishing given that atmospheric nuclear weapons tests in the Australian desert by Great Britain have had the full agreement of a succession of Australian governments. These atmospheric explosions are highly "polluting," whereas the French tests are underground.

The tests in question do not involve H-bombs, but defensive Enhanced Radiation Weapons (ERW), e.g., the neutron-bomb. France has already mastered such ERWs, and is now attempting, with some apparent success, to miniaturize and calibrate their charges.

No one seriously doubts that the campaign against the nuclear tests, a political destabilization of New Caledonia, and the ongoing efforts to destabilize French Guyana and Guadeloupe, are all linked. French Guyana serves as the launch site for Ariane, the European Space Agency's commercial rockets. The Soviet Union and its "peace movement" in the West are out to delay and sabotage the development of France's miniaturized neutron weapon—the only means by which a Soviet armored assault on the European continent could be stopped

cold. The Soviets would also be most interested in sabotaging France's Guayana-based space efforts, which will eventually be of great importance in Europe's contribution to the American Strategic Defense Initiative.

Joxe's aim is quite clearly to not only destabilize the secret services and weaken the position of the army, but sabotage a political process which has seen President Mitterrand and his close associates realigning themselves in preparation for the 1986 legislative elections. Mitterrand has been preparing himself to "cohabit" with an increasingly pro-American right-wing coalition which will undoubtedly win the bulk of parliamentary seats in March of next year. The President's calls for national unity on the defense issue illustrate this point.

Hernu was the key government personality in this realignment process. He had become a real spokesman for the French armed forces, sometimes to the great dismay of his Socialist colleagues, and is viewed as a "closet pro-American." Publicly, he was obliged to denounce the SDI, given the government's overall position on the matter. But no one put much stock in that. The head of the neo-Gaullist RPR Party, Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac, is likely to become the next Prime Minister, and he has endorsed SDI along with other opposition leaders. Hernu would have fit right in to the new government of 1986, few doubted.

Mitterrand's realignment implied that he was ready to "sacrifice" the French Socialist Party and its more extremist elements. The Greenpeace affair simply signals that those leftists who were about to be sacrificed have reacted by aligning themselves with the enemies of France. Then Mitterrand, if sources are correct, panicked and sacrificed Hernu.