

## Report from Paris by Mark Burdman

### Raymond Barre: 'General of Division'

*Someone has begun a campaign to discredit the former prime minister and would-be President.*

According to a broadcast on France's *Europe One* radio Feb. 19, a campaign has begun in France to dub former Prime Minister Raymond Barre the "General de division," or, in English, "General of Division."

The pun apparently has M. Barre and his followers quite upset. Trilateral Commissioner Barre could scarcely be mistaken for the commander of a military division; his *métier* is rather to divide the Opposition to French Socialist President François Mitterrand, and prevent the emergence of a more pro-American and pro-defense government, in the aftermath of the March 16 parliamentary elections.

*Europe One's* commentator speculated about who could possibly be behind the campaign against the unfortunate M. Barre. "It must be the European Labor Party," or Parti Ouvrier Européen (POE), he said, since "only the POE" would have initiated such a slogan.

The Parti Ouvrier Européen is the co-thinker party, in France, of American presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche. Known for its "outrageous" and impolite refusal to accept the domination of France by either Barre's Trilateral Commission or the Soviet Union, the party is fielding a slate of approximately 250 candidates in the coming elections. It will be running in 23 of France's "departments," or provinces, and will have, accordingly, access to French national television time.

POE chairman Jacques Cheminade was quick to deny responsibility

for the "General de division" campaign, however. "I am happy that the campaign is against Barre, but, frankly, my puns are usually better. I would guess that Valéry Giscard d'Estaing [President when Barre was prime minister] is behind it."

Giscard's Union pour de la Démocratie Française (UDF) is one of France's Opposition parties, and it is not surprising that he would have something against his former prime minister.

During the first weekend of February, French papers carried reports that President Mitterrand had publicly welcomed Barre's decision, made in late January, *not* to support a new French government after March 16, that would be led by the Gaullists (Rassemblement pour la République, or RPR) of Jacques Chirac, in a coalition with Giscard's UDF. This is the so-called cohabitation idea: Mitterrand, who is not up for re-election, would stay in as President, but with a government composed of parties opposed to his Socialist Party.

Outside of Cheminade's POE, there are four non-communist opposition parties in France, which are usually called "the Opposition." There are the Gaullists; the Giscardiens; a cross-party group known as the "Barristes," who are loyalists of Raymond Barre; and the National Front of racist-populist demagogue Jean-Marie LePen.

By not supporting "the Opposition," Barre has, indeed, "divided" the Opposition, to Mitterrand's obvious

advantage. In fact, the Feb. 1-2 weekend *Quotidien de Paris* newspaper ran a headline, "Mitterrand: Thank You, Raymond Barre."

And polls throughout February have been showing a steadily rising curve for Mitterrand. Although it is still most unlikely that the Socialists could prevent a significant legislative loss come March 16, Mitterrand's new ratings in the opinion polls give him, potentially, a much greater voice in what the next French government looks like. It also weakens the potential for a strong RPR-UDF-led government, to abandon Mitterrand's appeasement of Moscow and adopt a more pro-American position, as many in both parties would like to do.

At this point, factional alignments in Paris get quite byzantine, as each grouping pursues its own aims, in conflict with those of its tactical allies. Suffice it to say, that the French Communist Party, for its own Moscow-directed reasons, as well, have also, through various subtle gestures and actions, made initiatives during the month of February to bolster Mitterrand.

For Mitterrand, the aim is simple: He emerges more powerful, and in control of events.

For Barre, the motivations are different. General Division hopes to become France's next President. If he can weaken the next government, and create conditions of general political aimlessness and chaos in France, he could force the conditions for early general elections before the slated 1988 date.

Success for Barre would mean a triumph for those elite financial families of Europe who stand behind him: the Swiss-linked insurance cartels, the larger banks, and the oligarchical interests who have cut their deal with Moscow.