

Report from Paris by Jacques Cheminade

France must intervene in America

Britain broke with Syria as a terrorist state; France temporized. What are the real issues?

Let's be blunt: We appreciate the attitude of Mrs. Thatcher toward Syria more than that of the French government, and we would prefer that Europe spoke with one voice.

But no one should be fooled on the nature of the terrorism which has been hitting Paris for weeks. At bottom, it never was a question of a "Middle East" initiative, but of a Soviet irregular-warfare operation. The bombings' main aim was not to obtain some specific goal, such as freeing some jailed terrorists, but to weaken our political power and, if possible, to make France ungovernable—to the benefit of Russian strategy.

Unfortunately, there's a risk this aim could be partly achieved, if the general confusion of positions taken by all sides continues. We would like to contribute to turning things around by restating the grounds upon which decisive choices will be made.

The government, before Premier Chirac's trip to the United States for the U.N. General Assembly, was preparing strong actions. But the Americans Chirac met with, notably Secretary of State Shultz, showered him with "go-slow" advice, and promised not a whit of support in case France took steps against the terrorists. Has anyone noticed that so far Washington has not acted (apparently) any more than Paris?

What then could the French government do? Either prove our character and independence—the way we would have preferred, but which would have required means which it was thought France did not have; or play

the role allotted to France in the Western division of labor: to work "from inside" in the war of succession unfolding in Syria, by trying to undermine the most pro-Soviet "clans" and branches of secret services. (Usually well-informed sources say the article in *Le Monde* on Oct. 30, claiming that "the government obtained a truce with the Abdallah clan" of terrorists, could only be disinformation.) That's the choice which the government has made, a choice which obviously makes mincemeat of the bellicose pledges of a few weeks ago, and which risks disorienting the French people, if clear explanations are not given.

However, to make a big deal out of this setback, however inglorious, and accuse the government of all evils, is even more to boost the "destabilization scenario" which only benefits Russian strategy. The mistake would be keeping our noses stuck into Mideast policy, losing sight of the overall situation.

Not accidentally, the Socialist press was the most vehement in denouncing the French position on Syria, joined by the parliamentary group around Trilateral Commission member Raymond Barre—in short, France's biggest promoters of a deal with the Kremlin. In the U.S., as in France, some odd Atlanticists scream about "Euro-cowards" and forget that the source of European weakness is the U.S. State Department. Denouncing this weakness without naming the source, they merely reinforce the isolationist trend in America, and pave the way for "de-coupling" Europe from

the United States.

Ultimately, the error made by those analyzing French Mideast policy comes from ignorance of Soviet power in the Mideast and Europe together—without which Hafez Assad could not exist.

Only the decisive joining of U.S., European, and Israeli policy can making it possible to attack terrorism. Without a clear definition of aims, means, and roles in this attack, the rest is nothing but speculation on various forms of impotence and suicidal "real-politicking."

France's role is not to launch into a flight forward in the Middle East, as some are pushing for, but to intervene into the core of American policy—particularly now that U.S. elections are over—to deal with the evil at its source. That means weakening the influence of the State Department and the New Yalta partisans, including those near President Reagan, and to staunchly back those who fight for a "peace through strength" policy of a Western alliance reinforced and renewed between equal partners.

Counterintelligence chief Pandraud's trip to Washington was a first step in this direction, and the meeting of the Western intelligence services at Saint-Cyr-au-Mont-d'Or near Lyon was a second. Others, and bolder ones, will have to be taken soon. Moreover, because of its effect on the Near East and the United States, we must give concrete backing, including funding, to Shimon Peres's "Marshall Plan" for peace.

The Mideast problem will find solution in a new context thus defined, which will take on its own dynamic. It is by the courage of the Chirac government shows in intervening in the U.S. that we must judge it, and not by short-term negotiations in the Middle East that will soon be relegated by history to their real importance.