

Report from Paris by Christine Bierre

Hernu warns of 'New Yalta'

Former defense minister blasts the "zero option" for dismantling NATO's nuclear arsenal in Europe.

Speaking at a dinner debate in Lyon on March 14, former Defense Minister Charles Hernu delivered one of the strongest attacks yet against the zero option and the latest Gorbachov "peace" proposals. The debate concluded the first general assembly of the GERMES, the "Groupeement d'Etude et de Réflexion Militaires et Strategiques," the strategic think-tank created by Hernu after he was ousted over the Greenpeace affair in 1985.

Hernu, a military thinker respected by defense-minded politicians from across the French political spectrum, clearly outlined the dangers of the strategic situation. He denounced the deal the superpowers are trying to strike at Europe's expense. Beware, he warned, that Reykjavik does not lead us to a new Yalta, worse than the first—a Yalta which would make the Pacific the main zone of U.S. influence, while Europe would become part of the Soviet zone of influence.

On Gorbachov's recent arms proposals, Hernu expressed deep concern over the initial praises for the offer by both the West German foreign minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, and his French counterpart, Raimond. Hernu warned that "Khrushchov had also made proposals of that sort." The former defense chief gave full support to the declarations of President François Mitterrand, who warned against any deal which did not take into account the tremendous imbalance of forces in the Warsaw Pact's favor in the European theatre, not only in short-range nuclear missiles, but also in conven-

tional forces and chemical weapons.

Like many French political leaders, Hernu warned that the Russians would try to include France's nuclear deterrent, the *Force de Frappe*, in later negotiations, something that France must refuse to do at all costs.

Adopting a typically Gaullist diffidence about any positive role for Britain in Europe, Hernu blasted the British Labour Party as "too sensitive to Gorbachov's proposals" and to "unilateral disarmament." He warned against the development of "national-neutralism" in Germany leading to a reunified, but disarmed Germany. Could one exclude the following scenario? he asked. Imagine that in four years Gorbachov decides to withdraw all Russian troops from East Germany. West Germany would respond by demanding a withdrawal of American troops from its soil in order to allow for reunification. And isn't there a coincidence, he remarked, between this scenario and the American proposals to pull medium-range nuclear weapons out of Europe?

Indicating that the situation in Germany is fast deteriorating, Hernu stated that "no time should be wasted" and that we "must act rapidly" lest the western line of defense might no longer be at the Elbe, but at the Rhine.

The former defense minister discussed some of the policies that France might adopt. He said that after 1992, through the ongoing modernization of the nuclear submarine forces, France will be able to wield more than 500 nuclear warheads, much more than is

needed for the defense of France alone. The possibility of an "enlarged *Force de Frappe*" enabling France to reinforce some of its allies, is not to be excluded in this context.

The broad common interests between the Federal Republic of Germany and France identify these two nations, in Hernu's view, as the main pillar of the alliance. While reiterating that the alliance could not possibly survive without the United States, he favors a greater French role in reinforcing Germany. He hailed the upcoming maneuvers of the French rapid deployment force (FAR) to take place in Germany next month and went as far as to favor creating mixed Franco-German combat units.

One problem we have, stated the ex-minister, is that the present structure of NATO does not allow for France, which is not a NATO member, and Germany, which is part of the integrated structure, to cooperate without first getting permission from the head of the NATO military command. Could there not be a reform of the NATO structure to allow for a bilateral treaty between France and Germany?

Hernu's remarks were in sharp contrast to statements made at the same gathering by former minister Leo Hamon, who while expressing some concern about the zero option, insisted that Europe should have no illusions about its chances to stop the "superpower deal." Hamon insisted that France should not become "isolated" in the alliance by appearing to neglect all chances of disarmament and should rather make constructive proposals for disarmament.

A leader is always relatively isolated, General de Gaulle said many times. The time has come for France to adopt a Gaullist attitude and to lead the Atlantic alliance away from its suicidal course.