

Socialist France

Finally, the notion of solidarity, of appealing to a sense of the common interest, of sacrifice, the idea of bringing about a major change in the attitude of the French, all this must be extremely appealing to a man like Mitterrand. Among other things, he is known to be an extremely cultured, literate person, a man who reads widely and who has demonstrated in his writings and his speeches that he is, in the best sense of the word, an intellectual. Or, as one awed Reagan official put it recently: "Mitterrand is deep."

Female "Oui," feminine "Non"

Another area where the Socialists have at least expressed radical intentions concerns women's issues. Four women have been appointed to ministerial posts, and two new ministries were created with women at their head: the Ministry of National Solidarity with Nicole Questiaux, and the Ministry of Women's Rights, headed by Yvette Roudy. It was Mme. Roudy who immediately set out to prove that not even that most sacred of French institutions, the French language, would stand in the way of feminism when she demanded that journalists address her as Madame *la* Ministre. But the Socialists have gone beyond mere words. Under the previous government the Ministry for the Condition of Women was given a derisory budget which provided support only for the functioning of the Ministry. Mme. Roudy has been given ten times as much (eighteen million dollars), and has earmarked funds for a publicity campaign for birth control aimed at immigrant women, young women and women in rural areas; for an information program on the rights of women; and for subsidies for women's information centres. Equally important on National Women's Day last March, both President Mitterrand and Prime Minister Mauroy pledged the government would ensure that abortion expenses would be reimbursed through social security, and that thirty percent of the seats would be guaranteed to women in the municipal and regional elections scheduled for this fall.

If the Mitterrand government has begun to blaze new pathways for women, one area where there has been more continuity than change is foreign affairs. Last November, when the foreign affairs budget went before the National Assembly, the Gaullist ex-Prime Minister and ex-Foreign Minister Couve de Murville sarcastically remarked that he had "desperately searched" for some indication of change in Socialist foreign policy but that he could find absolutely nothing. This is not surprising for, from the very inception of the new government, Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson had indicated there would be no major departures. Indeed, Mitterrand has hardly deviated from the line laid down by DeGaulle in 1966. This consists in keeping the French armed forces under French rather than NATO command (although Mitterrand has insisted that France remain a loyal member of the Atlantic Pact), maintaining a modern and well-equipped defence establishment, and continuing the development of an independent French nuclear deterrent. In June, 1982, the sixth French nuclear submarine was launched and President Mitterrand has approved the construction of a seventh. The Socialists have even backed away from their election promise to reduce the term of military service in France from one year to six months, arguing that such a move would be unwise in the face of rising unemployment. In a word, the Socialists will continue to follow the Gaullist path of maintaining an independent foreign policy.

DeGaulle lives

Moreover, both Cheysson and Mitterrand have been harshly critical of the European peace movement, which they disparage as "pacifist." The President and the government have apparently accepted American arguments that by 1984 there will be a nuclear imbalance in Europe in favor of the Soviets. Thus they have taken a hard line on the intermediate range missile controversy, while at the same time calling on both the Soviets and Americans to forge ahead with talks on arms reduction. However, the Socialists did not follow the Americans in imposing political or economic sanctions on the Soviets during the Polish crisis. In this the Socialists are well within the Gaullist tradition of preaching realism in foreign policy. For DeGaulle ideology was always less important than history, less important than the demands of realpolitik. Thus, if he abhorred communism (as does Mitterrand), DeGaulle nevertheless argued that only long-term historical changes could alter the deeply-held Soviet belief that any threat to the stability of Eastern Europe is a threat to the Soviet Union itself. With regard to the Polish crisis last fall, Mitterrand uttered a remark which easily could have fallen from the lips of DeGaulle himself: "For heaven's sake, how can anyone deny the outcome of the last war?"

If the government's policy toward the Soviet Union has hardly deviated at all from that of previous regimes, there have been only slight changes in its Middle East policy. Prior to taking office Mitterrand was known to be a friend of the Jewish community and of Israel. After all he was an early associate of and a long-time admirer of Pierre Mendès-France, and he always has supported the right of Israel to exist. Early in his term he promised that he would be the first French President to visit Israel. Yet, so even-handed has he appeared in his treatment of the Middle East that in January, 1982, the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs said: "Since May 10 we feel more warmth and more friendship than before in our relations with the French leaders at the Elysée palace (the President's residence) and at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs." And the Minister applauded the fact that the Socialists have recognized the right of the Palestinians to a state of their own. During his March visit to Israel, Mitterrand quite frankly told the Israelis that the only road to a solution to the Middle East conflict was through direct talks with the PLO. More recently, the Mitterrand government sharply criticized the Israeli invasion of the Lebanon and voted in the UN to condemn the Israelis for their actions. However, despite the existence of some anti-zionist sentiment on the left of the Socialist Party, it appears that for the foreseeable future Mitterrand's strong support for the State of Israel will be sufficient to maintain his image as a friendly critic.

The Third World

If there is one area where Mitterrand has imposed his personal stamp on policy, that area is relations with the Third World. It is worth recalling that during Mitterrand's long ministerial career under the Fourth Republic, he was on two occasions involved in ministries dealing with the French colonies, and that in 1953 he resigned his post in protest against the Laniel government's policy in Morocco. His second book, published in 1953, *On the Frontiers of the French Union*, was a sympathetic account of the French colonies, while in the 1956 Socialist government of Mollet,