

France takes a new approach to terror

by Philip Golub

In the wake of the assassination near Munich of Siemens executive Karl Heinz Beckurts and the devastating explosion which tore through the offices of one of the elite forces of the French national police, both on July 9, French intelligence and government officials have broken a long pattern of official European silence on terrorism, strongly hinting at the strategic international origins of the ongoing terror wave.

On July 10, speaking in the name of Premier Jacques Chirac, Denis Baudoin warned that the bombing "is a declaration of war." At the funeral of the senior police officer killed during the bombing of the Brigade for the Repression of Banditry, Chirac himself declared, "Terrorism is a mortal gangrene directed against our society . . . and must be extirpated." In private, French police and intelligence officials have been more outspoken. They point out that while key military or industrial figures are targeted for assassination in West Germany and France, a systematic effort to destabilize both French foreign intelligence and the national police has been ongoing since the ill-fated "Greenpeace" affair.

French officials see the targeting of France and West Germany as intimately linked to the crucial roles of both countries in the overall defense capability of the Atlantic Alliance. While the United States provides an irreplaceable defense capability, Franco-German military cooperation remains the backbone of the European component of Alliance defense. Since the early 1970s this cooperation has vastly increased in all domains, including the recent work on lasers, particle-beam weapons, optics, etc.

Mirroring political changes and strategic reorientations in Moscow, the Euroterrorist apparatus merged in October 1985 into a single command, officially combining Direct Action, the Red Army Faction, and the Communist Combatant Cells of Belgium. This merger not only augmented terrorist logistics but defined a shift of strategy. Unlike the atrocities of the late 1970s directed against "symbols" of "capitalism and the state," the new terror wave would target key personnel of NATO, French defense, and German industry. NATO and French military installations and infrastructure were hit by a sustained wave of sabotage and bombing over 1984 and 1985, including bombings of the French mil-

itary office in Bonn, NATO buildings in Brussels, and NATO petroleum pipelines running through Luxembourg and eastern France.

On July 25, 1985, Gen. René Audran was killed by Direct Action in Paris. German industrialist Ernst Zimmerman was killed a day later. After that, the French branch of Euroterrorism, Direct Action, targeted two key individuals for assassination: General Blandin of the Gendarmerie and Guy Brana of the French employers' association (CNPF). While these two attempts thankfully failed, the targeting had become obvious: key military personnel or individuals working in the civilian sector tied to military industrial affairs. The murder of West German industrialist Zimmerman and then Beckurts only confirms this European-wide pattern.

The July 9 bombing of the French police building in Paris was, in the stated view of French authorities, carried out by a "militarily trained" commando unit. While the name of one member of Direct Action, a terrorist who had army special forces training, was raised, the pool of such terrorists is large. It is proven that Euroterrorism comes out of special training camps in Lebanon led by Warsaw Pact instructors. In the vast and nebulous umbrella of the PFLP of Waddi Haddad and George Habash (both Warsaw Pact agents) and others, dozens of Euroterrorists were trained, some as active agents, some as sleepers. The ex-head of the French counterespionage service DST, Jean Rochet, recently noted that Western intelligence officials have detailed evidence of the Soviet sponsorship of Euroterrorism.

The problem French officials face after the Paris bombing is to repeal the policies of the two Socialist governments since 1981. Not only was a general amnesty of Direct Action's leaders ordered in 1982, leading to the release of dozens of key terrorists and their return to the underground, but appeasement was applied toward the Soviet-run ASALA (Armenian National Liberation Army) and other terrorist "movements." The national police and intelligence authorities were ordered to stop infiltration and other preventive measures needed to fight terrorism. The sudden shift of policy ordered in 1984, when France, in spite of the Socialists' agreements, was targeted anew, failed to reverse things: The terrorists had set up new structures, logistics, international communications, and hideouts. The naming of dogmatic Socialist Pierre Joxe as interior minister in 1985 brought the crisis to a head: Parallel police networks were created by Joxe's allies, French foreign intelligence was upset by the so-called Greenpeace affair, and the national police were paralyzed.

Under the new government and Interior Minister Charles Pasqua, a big change has been introduced. Terrorism is no longer treated as a sociological phenomenon, any more than the international narcotics trade. While Joxe's remaining allies within the national police continue to argue against the evidence of Soviet strategic sponsorship of terrorism, very few in places that count are willing to listen to the sociologists after the July 9 bombing.