

Ben Barka's kidnapers try to silence LaRouche's friends

by Gail G. Billington

On June 24, the 12th Chamber of the Paris Criminal Court found four friends of Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. guilty of "theft," in a political frameup case brought by the heirs of a deceased political contributor and supporter. Jacques Cheminade, Christine and François Bierre, and were condemned to pay stiff fines of 5,00 francs each, plus reparations of 1.1 million francs over the next three years, and received suspended prison sentences of 15 months for Cheminade and 13 months for the others.

The court's ruling is now on appeal, but were the sentences to be strictly enforced according to French criminal code, the defendants could be barred from participating in electoral politics for the next three years.

Silencing LaRouche's friends in France has been the clear intent of certain circles in the French political and intelligence community since the earliest stages of the Paris case. From the beginning, the French political police, the Renseignements Généraux, fed into the investigative record the "findings" of the U.S. Justice Department's multijurisdictional task force against LaRouche and associates in the United States, while the plaintiffs' attorneys filed newspaper clippings from the U.S. press "informing" the French court of LaRouche's prosecution and incarceration.

Jacques Cheminade, as head of the Schiller Institute in France and former president of the European Labor Party (POE), is recognized as the institutional counterpoint to the insanity of the "new world order" looting policies of the Bush administration, policies the government of French President François Mitterrand seems content to enforce as a junior partner. Cheminade and associates have situated the "LaRouche factor" in the direct line of the best policy impulses of former President Gen. Charles de Gaulle, particularly his initiatives for North-South cooperation in advancing the human condi-

tion through scientific and technological development.

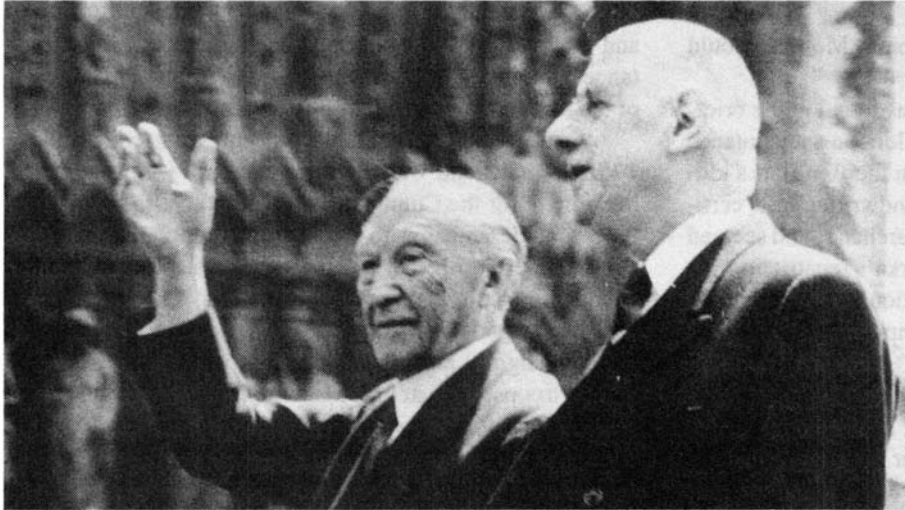
Therefore, it is not surprising to find that the historical enemies of General de Gaulle have been caught running the attempt to silence LaRouche's friends in France. The attorneys representing the plaintiffs in the Paris case were trained in the law firm of **Marcel Soroquère** and **Pierre Lemarchand**, the latter one of the key players in the biggest political scandal to rock the de Gaulle government in the mid-1960s: the kidnaping of Moroccan opposition leader Mehdi Ben Barka in Paris.

The "Ben Barka affair," like the Kennedy assassination, is one of the biggest unsolved mysteries of the last generation. It occurred at the height of de Gaulle's battles against the "Atlanticization" of Europe, including his fight to keep Great Britain out of the European Common Market, his break with NATO over the issue of France's nuclear forces, and his major policy overtures to the nations of Africa, Asia, and Ibero-America, especially aimed at laying to rest the bitter history of French decolonization in the Maghreb. More than any other single incident in that period, the "Ben Barka affair" shattered the credibility of the Gaullist establishment and, not coincidentally, led to the ascendance of "Atlanticists" such as **François Mitterrand**.

Lemarchand's role in the "Ben Barka affair" was a very personal blow to General de Gaulle. Lemarchand was married to Michelle LePercq, the adopted daughter of General and Mme. de Gaulle. Lemarchand was one of the "trusted ones" of the Gaullist secret counterterror apparatus during the bloody days of the Algerian war.

Stench of an 'inside' operation

On Oct. 29, 1965, exiled Moroccan opposition leader **Mehdi Ben Barka** was kidnaped in broad daylight from a



French President Charles de Gaulle (right) with German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. The Ben Barka affair destabilized de Gaulle at a crucial time for his foreign policy initiatives, notably his collaboration with Adenauer and with President John F. Kennedy and circles close to Pope Paul VI.

busy sidewalk in Paris by two French narcotics agents and an undercover French foreign intelligence (SDECE) agent, driven to a house in the Paris suburbs, and never heard from or seen again. He was presumed tortured and murdered, though no reliable eyewitnesses ever came forward, and his body was never found.

The evidence of collusion, or at least foreknowledge of Ben Barka's abduction, reached into the personal staff of Prime Minister **Georges Pompidou** and sent shockwaves through the French intelligence establishment. By January 1966, the head of the foreign intelligence agency, SDECE, and one deputy director of SDECE were fired; SDECE itself was taken out of the jurisdiction of the prime minister and placed under supervision of the Army, pending sweeping overhaul of the agency.

Ultimately, the three agents who escorted Ben Barka into a waiting police vehicle were the only ones convicted and sentenced to stiff prison terms. Moroccan Interior and Defense Minister **Gen. Mohammed Oufkir** and two top aides were given life sentences *in absentia*. King Hassan II's refusal to extradite the three men to France led to a breach in diplomatic relations between France and Morocco. One suspect who escaped conviction was attorney Pierre Lemarchand, who was, however, disbarred for three years for his role in the affair.

In trying to unravel the layers of double- and triple-cross in the affair, the most obvious conclusion is that President de Gaulle stood to lose everything and gain nothing as a result of the fiasco. In fact, an outraged de Gaulle charged that "someone was taking him for a fool," while writer François Mauriac voiced the general's sentiments that "only the Americans stood to gain."

As with the Warren Commission report on the Kennedy assassination, the official version of Ben Barka's kidnaping raises more questions than it answers.

Circumstantial evidence, however, points to the identical Anglo-American "special operations" networks that ran the

early 1960s Congo destabilization, the assassinations of Kennedy and Italian industrialist Enrico Mattei, and, in the late 1960s to early 1970s, that led to the breakup of the "French Connection" in heroin trafficking, shifting ultimate financial and political control over narcotics to the Anglo-Americans. When the dust settled, much of the drug traffic had been displaced to Ibero-America.

Tantalizing, but as-yet-untraced leads, point to CIA and Israeli intelligence assets, and key players in the Permindex apparatus, which former New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison identified as the operational command center in the Kennedy assassination.

Overtures to Ben Barka

In 1965, Moroccan **King Hassan II** wanted to open channels of communication to Mehdi Ben Barka, the king's former mathematics teacher and the most respected leader of the opposition to the monarchy. At the time, Ben Barka was in exile in France, having been condemned to death *in absentia* for his participation in an alleged coup attempt the previous year, and having survived two assassination attempts. Ben Barka was chairman of the steering committee for the first Tricontinental Congress scheduled for January 1966 in Havana, Cuba. The Tricontinental Congress was heralded as a milestone in organizing a global Third World alliance against imperialism, an initiative that subsequently failed in the wake of the Sino-Soviet split.

Through family members, Hassan contacted senior officials of the de Gaulle government to open channels to Ben Barka. De Gaulle had personally awarded Ben Barka the Legion of Honor, and certainly would have been interested in his Third World activities. Danish journalist Henrik Kruger suggests in his book *The Great Heroin Coup*, that a plan of collaboration was presented by the Moroccans to Interior Minister **Roger Frey**, Overseas Territories Minister **Jacques Foccart** or de Gaulle's son-in-law Pierre Lemarchand. The idea was to lure Ben Barka to Paris, and detain him on some

pretext until the terms of his repatriation to Morocco could be worked out.

In January 1966, a questionnaire was found in the briefcase of **Georges Figon**, a client and childhood acquaintance of Lemarchand and a principal player in the Ben Barka kidnaping. Subsequent court-appointed handwriting tests certified the document to be written by Lemarchand, and seemed to enumerate the conditions for Ben Barka's repatriation. At least one copy had a handwritten notation by Lemarchand: "Conférence Elysée. Le Général—Pompidou—Frey—Foccart. P. Lemarchand."

Hassan's trusted interior and defense minister, General Oufkir, had no intention of repatriating Ben Barka, particularly since evidence suggests that Oufkir had framed up Ben Barka and 76 other opposition leaders on the coup attempt the previous year and had ordered his assassination. General Oufkir launched his own, parallel approach to Ben Barka.

Oufkir was well connected to American and Israeli intelligence, and was known as a ruthless killer from his service with the French military in the Italian campaign in World War II and as a special forces commando leader in Indochina. In 1965, Morocco and Ethiopia received the lion's share of U.S. economic and military assistance to Africa, and the Kenitra air base was a center of CIA activity covering both Africa and the Middle East.

Oufkir worked closely with the Israeli Mossad, sending his secret police to Israel to be trained by them. In 1965, Oufkir contacted Mossad chief **Meir Amit**, requesting Israeli assistance in surveilling Ben Barka in Europe. Amit sent a team to Geneva, but then, allegedly, called Oufkir to say it was a wasted effort because Moroccan and French agents were tripping over each other.

The 'bearded ones'

The French government's biggest vulnerability in the entire Ben Barka affair was that the back-channel contact to Ben Barka was run through "semi-official," "special operations" networks, comparable to the "quasi-autonomous non-governmental organizations" involved in Lt. Col. Oliver North's Iran-Contra back channel.

For the French government, this meant tapping the "unofficial" capabilities of the Gaullist counterterror forces deployed against the Secret Army Organization (OAS) in Algeria, known as the "bearded ones" or the *barbouzes*. For Oufkir, it meant tapping into the old Tangiers-based organized crime gangs, heavily involved in drugs, prostitution, and murder for hire.

The *barbouzes* were recruited directly from the ranks of organized crime in France and its colonies, from prisons, those with criminal records, and the former Gaullist security units, the SAC. One author says they were killer squads, almost entirely comprised of Vietnamese and French underworld figures, as brutal in their methods as the OAS. The "trusted ones" at the head of the *barbouzes* were Lemarchand

and others, many of whom had been in the wartime Resistance. In Lemarchand's case, those he recruited to the ranks of the *barbouzes* were frequently his legal clients.

After the aborted "generals' putsch" against de Gaulle in 1961, Lemarchand was recruited by **André Goulay** of the Movement for the Community to build the *barbouzes*. Goulay was aide-de-camp to **Dominique Ponchardier**, code-named "the Gorilla" in the French Resistance, and subsequently France's ambassador to Bolivia. Interior Minister Frey had tagged Ponchardier to run the *barbouzes* counterterror campaign. Lemarchand claims to have recruited 300 "shock troops," assisted by his wife, Michelle, who handled logistics and funds for transporting the recruits to Algeria. When Goulay was mortally wounded in Algeria, Lemarchand emerged as the *barbouzes'* patron.

The core network involved in the Ben Barka affair was the **Joe Attia** gang. Attia was a typical "Resistance-Gaullist gangster." He had been in the Mathausen concentration camp with several Gaullist leaders and had protected them there. He was very close to the research director of SDECE, **Colonel Bertrand**, alias **de Beaumont**. Attia's center of operations in the 1950s and early 1960s was Tangiers, the center of French colonial drug trafficking.

Attia was involved in drug trafficking with the Renucci family, heirs to the Carbone and Spirito families, who organized the pre-World War II Corsican Union in Marseilles. **Joe Renucci** was a member of the Gaullist RPF in 1949 and close to **Roger Wybot**, head of the French domestic intelligence agency (DST) and close to the Israeli secret services. Renucci picked up on the Montreal organized crime connection earlier established by Spirito, and cemented a famous deal with **Lucky Luciano** and the Venturi brothers.

Attia's gang was repeatedly tagged by SDECE to run special operations. The core group included **Georges Boucheseiche**, **Julien Le Ny**, **Jean Palisse**, **Georges Figon**, and **Antoine Lopez**. In 1955, Attia and Palisse collaborated in an attempted assassination of the head of the Moroccan opposition party, Istiqlal. Their escape was made possible by Air France Tangiers representative Antoine Lopez; the explosives were provided by SDECE Deputy Commissioner **Marcel Leroy-Finville's** Division 7.

In 1963, Palisse, Le Ny, Figon, and Boucheseiche abducted the OAS's **Colonel Argoud**, the mastermind of several assassination attempts on de Gaulle, from a street in Munich, Germany and transported him back to France in a French military vehicle. The "Argoud affair" had disastrous repercussions on de Gaulle's relations with Chancellor Konrad Adenauer.

The 1975 Church Committee report on CIA clandestine operations revealed that Joe Attia, codenamed QJ/WIN, had been hired by the CIA to assassinate Congolese leader **Patrice Lumumba**, whom Attia knew well as a patron of his nightclub in Abidjan. Attia did not kill Lumumba, but "liberated" him from house arrest where he was being held by

Mobutu Sese Seko and U.N. troops. Lumumba was recaptured by Mobutu and turned over to Katangan rebel leader **Moïse Tshombe**, who ordered his execution.

One Lemarchand recruit to the *barbouzes*, **Christian David**, was a backup assassin hired by the CIA to kill Lumumba. David, codenamed “WI Rogue” or “Beau Serge,” was in prison with Attia and Lemarchand associate Georges Figon, and claims to have “suicided” Figon in January 1966 to stop leaks about the Ben Barka affair. David subsequently worked with *barbouzes* leaders Ponchardier and **Roger Barberot** in Ibero-America as part of the “French Connection.”

Morocco’s General Oufkir also had close ties to the Attia gang going back to Tangiers. In exchange for collaboration in Oufkir’s plan against Ben Barka, gangster Georges Boucheseiche was promised a major brothel and nightclub concession in Morocco, and Air France agent Antoine Lopez was to be named head of Air Maroc.

Attia’s gang of Georges Boucheseiche, Julien Le Ny, Jean Palisse, Georges Figon, and Antoine Lopez was the team deployed in the Ben Barka kidnaping. Ben Barka was taken to Boucheseiche’s house in the Paris suburbs after his kidnaping. Air France agent Lopez received an eight-year prison sentence for his role in “facilitating” the kidnaping. SDECE deputy chief Leroy-Finville was fired in January 1966 for his role in the Ben Barka affair.

Baiting the trap

In spring 1965, General Oufkir assigned the chief of the Moroccan secret service, **M. Chtouki**, to make contact with Antoine Lopez, who was Air France representative at Paris’s Orly Airport and an undercover SDECE agent monitoring drug traffic for the narcotics squad; Georges Figon, long-time acquaintance and client of Lemarchand; and **Philippe Bernier**, a journalist and trusted acquaintance of Ben Barka. The approach to Ben Barka centered around a proposal for a movie, entitled *Basta*, tracing the history of the anti-colonial, Third World movement.

A series of meetings in Cairo and Geneva through September 1965 with Bernier and Figon drew Ben Barka into the film project. As early as the summer of 1965, Figon offered Joe Attia “a piece of the action” in putting together a team to kidnap an Arab politician. In September 1965, Julien Le Ny of the Attia gang testified that Figon confided to him that he was involved in arranging a meeting between Ben Barka and leading Moroccan political figures, with the help of Lopez.

Le Ny testified that he accompanied Figon to Lemarchand’s residence on Sept. 8, where Lemarchand corroborated Figon’s story that the operation was sanctioned by the French secret service. Le Ny testified that he knew Lopez was “an important member of SDECE, specialized in Moroccan affairs.” As Figon and Le Ny parted company, Figon said “Petitjean” was the key person in the affair. “Petitjean” is the nickname of Renseignements Généraux commissioner **Jean Caille**, another old acquaintance of Lemarchand’s from the

Algerian war.

Antoine Lopez testified that he first became aware of Lemarchand’s involvement in the plot on Sept. 20, when by coincidence, Figon and Lemarchand arrived at Orly to catch a flight to Geneva. In fact, Lopez held the flight 10 minutes, just long enough for Figon to board, on his way to a rendezvous with Ben Barka. Figon jokingly introduced Lemarchand to Lopez as his “cover.” Lemarchand countered that he was on his way to Geneva to meet a client.

Shortly after the Orly incident, Lopez began reporting on the progress of the Ben Barka project to his SDECE superior, Deputy Commissioner Leroy-Finville. By early October, Leroy-Finville knew this included a plan to “abduct Ben Barka and, eventually, to make him disappear.” According to the commissioner, on Oct. 8, he informed the head of SDECE, **Gen. Paul Jacquier**, and from that moment, the decision was made not to leave matters in the hands of Figon and the *barbouzes*, but to establish direct contact with the Moroccans through Lopez. Lopez, on orders, arranged to meet Chtouki in Geneva. He also recruited back up from his acquaintances in the narcotics squad, **Louis Souchon** and **Roger Voitot**.

Lopez assured Souchon that the operation was sanctioned by SDECE, adding that Overseas Territories and African Affairs Minister “*Foccart est au parfum*” (“Foccart is in on it”). When Souchon hesitated, Lopez told him to expect a call the next morning from the Interior Ministry. Souchon did indeed receive such a call, although who was on the line is not clear.

The fateful rendezvous to finalize the movie plans was set for Oct. 29 at the Brasserie Lipp in Paris. As Ben Barka approached, Souchon and Voitot walked up to him, flashed their police credentials, and asked him to accompany them for questioning, allegedly on a drug-related matter. Lopez was waiting in the police car.

Accounts vary as to what happened next. Henrik Kruger says a second car, including Attia gang members Boucheseiche, Le Ny, Dubail, and Palisse, followed the narcotics agents out of the city. According to the testimony of the French agents, Ben Barka was turned over to the Attia gang and two Moroccan secret service agents at Boucheseiche’s house in Fontenay-le-Vicomte. Shortly thereafter, Lopez called Leroy-Finville with the message: “Pedro to Thomas—the package has been delivered.” *L’Express* magazine reported that Lopez also called General Oufkir in Rabat with the message: “Package has been delivered, and the General is expected as soon as possible.”

General Oufkir arrived in France the next day and departed within 24 hours, only to return three days later for a reception at the Moroccan embassy. Lopez reported to Commissioner Finville on Sunday, Oct. 31, but Leroy-Finville waited until Tuesday, Nov. 2 to inform his superiors and to arrange a meeting with Renseignements Généraux Commissioner Jean Caille. *L’Express* reported that Caille had independently arranged with Lemarchand for a private interview with his client, Georges Figon, and that by Nov. 2, Caille had fully briefed

Interior Minister Roger Frey on the kidnaping.

Georges Figon subsequently went into hiding in the company of Lyons mobster and former Lemarchand client **Felix Lesca**. Over the next three months, until Figon was found "suicided" on Jan. 17, 1966, Lesca would "leak" statements from Figon that he had witnessed General Oufkir torture and murder Ben Barka.

L'Express reported that de Gaulle was ignorant of the Leroy-Finville reports to General Jacquier and the Caille-Lemarchand reports to Interior Minister Frey until much later.

In January 1966, de Gaulle reshuffled his cabinet, fired Jacquier and Leroy-Finville, and placed SDECE under the supervision of the minister of the Army, pending full-scale housecleaning.

Lopez, Souchon, Voitot, and Leroy-Finville were all convicted for their roles in the kidnaping. International arrest warrants were issued for Oufkir, Chtouki, and **Colonel Dlimi** of the Moroccan secret service, and Boucheseiche, who had escaped to Morocco, but King Hassan refused to extradite them, leading to a break in diplomatic relations.

According to author Daniel Guérin, Lemarchand escaped indictment due to very heavy pressure brought by the Elysée Palace and thanks to the "suicide" of Figon. However, he was disbarred for three years. His role has never been satisfactorily explained.

The Ben Barka kidnaping has never been solved. Moroccan secret service official Dlimi subsequently testified in French courts that Ben Barka was still alive when General Oufkir saw him shortly after his kidnaping. Georges Boucheseiche's wife swore that Ben Barka was kidnaped by "others" from the house in the Paris suburbs. General Oufkir subsequently told a journalist that the CIA had been working behind his back all along. The body was never found. The investigation and trial dragged into the fall of 1967, and was a recurring source of attack on de Gaulle.

From 'barbouzes' . . . to Perminde?

There are gaping holes in the Ben Barka story. The question "*cui bono?*" has never been satisfactorily answered, although several interesting leads exist.

The close collaboration of the Attia gang to French intelligence "special ops" deployments raises the question of a strategic direction to this wrecking operation against de Gaulle's foreign policy. Circumstantial evidence points to two individuals, whose role, if any, in the Ben Barka affair could lead to the bigger picture.

Maj. Louis Mortimer Bloomfield was born in Tangiers, and at least from 1961 through 1965 was a licensed member of the Tangiers Bar Association. Bloomfield was identified by New Orleans District Attorney Garrison as a central figure in the Perminde organization, which Garrison believed to be the brains behind the Kennedy assassination. Bloomfield's Montreal law practice represented the Bronfman family liquor empire and major Swiss financial interests, suggesting

potential overlaps to Joe Attia's ties to similar Montreal-based liquor distribution and Swiss banks.

Flamboyant art dealer **Fernand Legros** adds a totally different dimension to the Ben Barka affair. In an exposé of the SDECE, *Le Comité*, allegedly ghostwritten by fired SDECE Deputy Commissioner Leroy-Finville, he describes a secret meeting in the offices of the French prime minister shortly before the Ben Barka kidnaping. There, he says, he was ordered by a certain "M. Legros" to cooperate with Antoine Lopez on "a drug control measure, Ben Barka's abduction." Leroy-Finville says he refused until he was given assurances that the action was sanctioned by his superiors in SDECE.

Henrik Kruger suggests that "M. Legros" is Fernand Legros, the man the CIA "assigned to snoop on U.N. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld." Legros confirmed to Kruger that he used his Geneva-based art gallery as a front for CIA activities.

But Fernand Legros, as his biographer Roger Peyrefitte says, was, if anything, "*une vie extraordinaire*." Legros was the homosexual lover of Dag Hammarskjöld, assigned by the CIA to monitor, in particular, the U.N. secretary general's dealings with Third World leaders. Legros parlayed his art gallery and espionage activities into a multimillion-dollar fortune, tied to gun running, money laundering, and major offshore Caribbean banking operations.

Legros's list of intimate acquaintances reads like a "Who's Who" of world leaders and the rich and infamous: Bernie Cornfeld, Robert Vesco, Sen. Adlai Stevenson, Algeria's Belkacim Krim, Liberia's Adolphus Benedict Tolbert, Georges and Mme. Pompidou. He carried diplomatic passports courtesy of the heads of state of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Haiti, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Honduras. Biographer Peyrefitte makes clear that Legros's sexual proclivities opened untold doors high in the French and international political and social establishments. He was a collector of young men and the wives of powerful men alike.

The details of Legros's assignments for the CIA are left largely to the reader's imagination, but Peyrefitte does report that in 1961 a last-minute phone call saved Legros from boarding the plane in the Congo on which Dag Hammarskjöld was killed; in 1962, a last-minute phone call kept Legros off the plane on which Italian ENI chairman Enrico Mattei was killed; in 1963, Legros was in Dallas selling paintings when Kennedy was killed; and in 1965, he was in Paris when Ben Barka was kidnaped. Reportedly, he was "bemused" by the abduction.

Legros was intimate friend, adviser, and arms supplier to Katangan rebel leader Tshombe, and through this Congo connection, he was in close collaboration with the French organized crime networks later involved in the Ben Barka affair. Legros trafficked in weapons to both sides in the Congo and Algerian crises and in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

Legros knew Ben Barka well. Through his Algerian

friend **Belkacim Krim**, Legros was investing funds for the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN), raised from immigrant laborers in Europe, in a portfolio of valuable paintings stored in Swiss banks. Ben Barka came into possession of several of the paintings under unexplained circumstances. At the time of his kidnaping, Legros was trying to find a buyer for Ben Barka's paintings.

In the late 1960s, Legros became the target of an art scandal. As the investigation moved toward criminal indictment, Legros's informants on the progress of the investigation within the French government included Prime Minister Pompidou and Interior Minister **Louis Joxe**. His team of lawyers included the Master of the masonic Grand Lodge of France, **Richard Dupuy**, and attorney Marcel Soroquère. Soroquère later became the law partner of Pierre Lemarchand, and it was in the office of Soroquère and Lemarchand that the attorneys in the current Paris "LaRouche" case were trained.

In 1972, just as the French Ricord drug networks were being shut down in Ibero-America, Legros was placed under "protective custody" in Rio de Janeiro, allegedly in connection with the art fraud scandal. In 1974, he was kidnaped by SAC agents and returned to France. U.S. Secretary of State **Henry Kissinger** personally intervened on his behalf, protesting that Legros, who had become an American citizen while in the employ of the CIA, had been illegally kidnaped. Legros was released from French custody and flown back to the United States.

Political impact in France

The direct result of the Ben Barka affair in France was a shattering of the Gaullist majority and a tremendous boost in the credibility of Socialist leader François Mitterrand. Nineteen sixty-five was a presidential election year, and the scandal broke one week before President de Gaulle formally announced that he would run for reelection. Mitterrand was his leading opponent, followed by centrist **Jean Lecanuet** and OAS-linked right-winger **Tixier-Vignancourt**. By the end of November, de Gaulle's support had collapsed from 70% in August to 51%. In the weeks before the Dec. 5 vote, Interior Minister Frey was implicated in the affair, and SDECE agent Lopez, narcotics agents Souchon and Voitot, and others were arrested.

De Gaulle won the first round of voting with 43.7% of the vote. For the second round, Mitterrand coaxed Lecanuet to drop out of the race, while Tixier-Vignancourt and his OAS supporters threw their support to Mitterrand "without condition." His campaign manager at the time was New Right populist **Jean-Marie Le Pen**. On Dec. 19, de Gaulle won the second round with a paltry 54.6% of the vote.

In early 1966, new revelations implicating the two top SDECE officials and the "suicide" of Georges Figon fueled a further backlash going into the legislative elections. By then, Mitterrand had buried the hatchet with the Communist Party and posed a solid front against the ruling coalition.

In the final round of voting, the Communists and Socialist together gained 31 seats, while the government lost 44. De Gaulle's coalition was reduced to a three-seat majority in the National Assembly, and that thanks only to the 43 seats held by the "ambiguous" Giscardians.

End of the de Gaulle-Kennedy alliance

The Ben Barka affair struck at the heart of de Gaulle's foreign policy initiatives, in which he collaborated with President John F. Kennedy in the last years of Kennedy's life, and with circles close to Pope Paul VI. The outlines of the policy were stated in the 1967 papal encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, and focused on allying with the developing sector nations for scientific and technological development against the Cold War spheres of influence condominium of the Anglo-Americans and Soviets.

Trust between the two Presidents grew after they had identified their common enemy. Following the aborted "generals' coup" in Algiers in April 1961, de Gaulle secretly wrote to Kennedy, identifying the circles behind the mutinous independent Algeria putsch as identical to the sponsors of the Bay of Pigs fiasco. Relations further improved after the 1962 Cuban missile crisis and Kennedy's firing of "that madman" Henry Kissinger.

There is evidence that Kennedy and de Gaulle, with Vatican help, were secretly trying to defuse the Indochina crisis, when Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem was assassinated shortly before Kennedy's death. Both were involved in Africa and Ibero-America. Kennedy was shattered when Patrice Lumumba was murdered in the Congo. De Gaulle called for a week of national mourning in France when Kennedy was killed. Shortly before the Ben Barka affair, de Gaulle renewed his initiatives toward the nations of the South, making extended tours of Africa and Ibero-America.

De Gaulle was also embroiled in bitter battles over the "Atlanticist" idea of Europe. On Jan. 14, 1963, he vetoed British membership in the Common Market, warning that London would wreck it from within. On March 7, 1966, de Gaulle wrote to President Lyndon B. Johnson, that since France was no longer a member of NATO, U.S. troops were no longer required on French territory.

The battle cost Kennedy his life; de Gaulle was the target of repeated assassination attempts from September 1961 on. Their collaborators—Italian Enrico Mattei, Congo's Patrice Lumumba, and Morocco's Mehdi Ben Barka—were brutally eliminated.

When the dust settled on the Ben Barka affair, much of the drug and financial traffic earlier controlled by the "French Connection" had been displaced to Ibero-America, and the proceeds were whitewashed through American banking interests. The American secret services had gathered extensive, damning evidence on the collusion of French secret service and political interests in drug trafficking and money laundering.