

New French defense program gives clear answer to Soviet war build-up

by Yves Messer

The new French defense program bill for 1987-91, presented to the National Assembly by Prime Minister Jacques Chirac and passed by the Assembly with near unanimity, represents an event of enormous significance for France and the entire Western world.

The spirit of the new defense program is very close to the program published a little over one year ago by the European Labor Party, co-thinkers in France of U.S. political figure Lyndon LaRouche. In substance, the program looks to a rapid and large-scale reinforcement of French defensive and offensive military capabilities, and likewise augments France's capacity to intervene in defense of its European and U.S. allies.

What made such a bill imperative is the unprecedented Soviet military build-up of the past decade. This has occurred simultaneously with a growing, naive belief in the U.S. Reagan administration that U.S.-Soviet negotiations for a "zero option" withdrawal of American medium-range nuclear missiles from Western Europe were feasible.

On April 8, French Defense Minister André Giraud clearly expressed the views of his government respecting the threat to the Western world:

The situation has never been so worrisome, because the temptation [for Moscow] to make use of its superiority is always great. Now, the Soviet bloc has amassed arsenals whose quantitative, and sometimes qualitative, superiority over those of the Atlantic Alliance is profoundly disquieting. With respect to air and land weapons, one can estimate that the Warsaw Pact has double the power of its Western counterparts. The Pact has three times the number of tanks, artillery, and helicopters that NATO has, and ten times the number of surface-to-air missiles.

A new 'de Gaulle era' of spending

Given these facts, the new French defense spending program is a legitimate response to the hegemonic dreams of Russia regarding the European theater.

Financially, the defense bill will increase by 40% over the coming five years the volume of annual credits for expenditure on military equipment. By the end of the five-year term, the defense budget will be over 4% of the gross domestic product, a level not reached in France since President Charles de Gaulle's 1969 budget. This is what allowed François Fillon, president of the National Assembly's Defense Commission, to affirm that this bill "may be considered to be . . . a new era . . . of a process begun 30 years ago by General de Gaulle."

Given the foreseen increase of the gross domestic product, the defense bill will make available for the coming five years a volume of credit identical to that expended over the preceding ten years. Furthermore, as Minister Giraud pointed out to the National Assembly, "The armaments programs will create French jobs. . . . This will be a veritable locomotive for economic development."

Concretely, the bill provides for strengthening and modernizing the strategic and tactical components of French defense capacity.

Respecting the Nuclear Strategic Forces (NSF), the bill provides for the following:

- 1) The strengthening of the Oceanic Strategic Force, i.e., the upgrading of France's existing SNLE nuclear submarines, and the construction of a new SNLE generation more silent than oceanic background noises.
- 2) The construction, for deployment on the submarine fleet, of M-4 nuclear missiles, to be replaced eventually by the longer-range M-5 missile, with its multiple warheads.
- 3) The missiles on the Plateau of Albion, prime targets of Soviet SS-22 missiles stationed in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, will be replaced by missiles of the S-4 type, which can be made mobile if necessary.

As for the Pre-Strategic Nuclear Armaments (ANP), its land-based component—that is, the Pluton missiles—will be replaced by the longer-range Hades. This is crucial for the defense of West Germany's eastern border. The ANP aerial forces will be provided with the new Mirage 2000-N, and will be equipped with medium-range missiles.

Land-based build-up

Fifteen programs are provided for in the conventional weapons realm. By the end of the century, air cover forces (Mirage III and V, and the Jaguar) will be replaced by the Mirage 2000-DA and by the Rafael tactical and naval combat plane. The defense bill also provides for the purchase of three AWACS radar planes for detection purposes.

The land-based component of French conventional forces will also be broadly strengthened, to confront the Warsaw Pact's enormous conventional capabilities. Speaking on this subject on behalf of the National Assembly's Finance Commission, Yves Guena said: "In the domain of land-based weapons, the program aims to prepare the battle corps . . . necessary in order to confront the threat which will become concretized in the European theater around 1995."

In order to do this, a combat helicopter with the firepower of a tank, but much greater mobility, will be built through Franco-German cooperation. Parallel to this, anti-tank weapons and surface-to-air systems will be modernized.

The national Navy will be the recipient of seven new programs, of which the most important will be the production of a nuclear aircraft carrier, with reinforced protection of surface-to-air missiles.

In addition, a third, specific budget will be for the first time dedicated specifically to the domain of space, comprising an average of 2% of the overall defense budget. Two programs are projected in this area: the Helios observation satellite, and the Syracuse-II telecommunication satellite. No specific information has been made available on the remaining third of the allocations for this area.

Need for a 'space shield'

Finally, the French program urges the construction of a European anti-ballistic system, to be built in cooperation with NATO. This would be a system resembling the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). The need for this was motivated in an "advisory" appended to the new defense bill by the Assembly's Foreign Affairs Commission.

Authored by parliamentary deputy Jacques Godfrain, a member of the ruling Rassemblement pour la République (RPR) party, the "advisory" says:

Technological evolution . . . can be destabilizing if one pays no attention to it, and if one fails to dedicate sufficient resources for the modernization of our defense potential. Thus, the creation of a space shield, in its final phase . . . could make questionable the very premises of deterrence.

Godfrain, later in the text, suggests: "But will it not be necessary to go further, and initiate now a space-based defense project inspired by the American SDI? Ought not France take an historic initiative in Europe in this domain, consequently enabling it to direct an ambitious European cooperation in the areas of defense and security?"

A French Military View

'National neutralism' gains in Germany

Parts of the French defense community are increasingly expressing their concern over the growth of "national-neutralist" tendencies in the Federal Republic of Germany (F.R.G.). These same circles have been most energetic in denouncing the so-called "zero option," knowing that it would lead to the de facto neutralization of all of continental Western Europe. This has been made clear by Premier Chirac's comments at the Western European Union meeting a few months ago, and more recently, by the statements of Defense Minister Giraud and RPR leader Godfrain (see article, preceding page).

The excerpts below are translated from an article on the Jan. 25 general elections in West Germany by Prof. François-Georges Dreyfus, published in the April 1987 issue of the official monthly of the French Defense Ministry, Defense nationale. The article is characterized by the review as "most useful" given that the results of the elections, marked by the "definite rise" of "national-neutralism," notably with the gains made by the Greens, "must prompt us to seriously think about their future possible consequences." Professor Dreyfus, an expert in West German affairs who heads the Institute of Higher European Studies in Strasbourg, endorsed the creation in France in 1981 of the National Committee for Nuclear Energy sponsored by the Fusion Energy Foundation.

For EIR's news coverage of the elections, see Vol. 14, No. 6, Feb. 6, 1987, page 42; and Vol. 14, No. 7, Feb. 13, 1987, page 46.

. . . As for the Greens, they have progressed by virtue of what we have called the development of the "German evil." The German people has always granted a large place to the problems of nature. This is probably linked to climatic conditions (one finds this indeed in all northern countries, Finland, the Scandinavian countries, Great Britain, and the Benelux). It is also linked to the influence of Protestant thought of which one movement, pietism, has played an essential part