

## Report from Paris by Our Paris Bureau

### Who will save France's honor?

*Madness seemed to grip both the Senate and National Assembly, but through the din, quiet voices of sanity spoke.*

**W**eapons will speak," announced President François Mitterrand prophetically in a short speech to the nation just hours before the bombing of Baghdad began on Jan. 16-17. "We undertook everything that was possible to do, but, unfortunately, not one word, not one sign came from Iraq that allowed us to hope that peace was at the end of the road," he intoned. "Our independence, our security demanded that price. To protect law is to protect our country: Let not the law of the strongest govern the world, because one day or other, it will strike us at home."

In lock-step with the U.S. Congress, France's National Assembly voted support for George Bush's "New World Order, that will last 100 years." (Can France have forgotten the Thousand-Year Reich?) The late President Gen. Charles de Gaulle, who, on all essential issues, sided with the Third World against the Anglo-Americans, must have spun in his grave that night, when 523 deputies voted for war against Iraq.

The 43 who had the courage to vote against war madness included: 26 Communists; 7 Socialists, of whom 5 are tied to Defense Minister Pierre Chevènement; 4 Gaullists, including de Gaulle's nephew Jean; and 1 from Giscard's party, and Le Pen's lone deputy. In the Senate, former minister in de Gaulle's government Maurice Couve de Murville, voted against the war.

"What debate?" asked the economic daily *La Tribune*. The paper characterizes the Parliament speeches as "stereotyped . . . broken by pre-

programmed applause, delivered for the most part, by the political leaders of groups more preoccupied with keeping all their members in line than to give free reign to individual expression. . . . Is there no place for a dialogue, even harsh, when it is a matter of authorizing the Executive to push the button?"

Going the Americans one better, Socialist Party head Pierre Mauroy suspended the 12 Socialists who voted against their President.

Meantime, while France's mission was clearly defined by Mitterrand to "liberate Kuwait," but not to participate in any manner in an attack against Iraq, French troops have been placed under U.S. operational control, for the duration. Not one significant voice has been raised against this breach of what was heretofore a sacrosanct principle of total independence on defense matters.

Voices of sanity have not been utterly silent, even so. In the weekly *Nouvelle Solidarité*, French Schiller Institute President Jacques Cheminade wrote:

"Let's be plain: François Mitterrand, after having defeated what Jean Jaurès and Pierre Mendès-France struggled to build in our history, is now destroying the heritage of General de Gaulle. . . . And hence, apart from certain who upheld the honor of our National Assembly, the Socialists voted against the heritage of Jaurès and the Gaullists against the heritage of General de Gaulle. There was not a single person . . . to establish the links between the Persian Gulf and

Palestine, the Persian Gulf and Lebanon, the Persian Gulf and the Baltic countries. . . .

"In the eyes of history, the deputies who today were able to say 'no,' or abstained, will have the same place as those who refused to vote full governmental powers to Marshal Pétain on July 10, 1940."

On Jan. 15, *Le Figaro* ran an "Open Letter to My Deputy" from former Defense Minister André Giraud—alas! too late.

"How have we come to this pass? . . . In a few hours, and without allowing the neighbors of Kuwait to express their feelings, a position was set, down to the nearest comma, and since then considered immovable, be it at the price of a merciless war. . . .

"Along the way, Syria's President was able to extend his grasp over Lebanon, all the while appearing among the number of our allies. . . .

"For the conflict will not, of necessity, be medium- to short-term, localized, or above all, characterized by enemy losses and followed by the kind of rapid appeasement that some people are writing about. All wars have appeared brief, even fresh and joyful before they start. . . .

"Or is it a question . . . like some say, to . . . destroy the nuclear capability of Iraq? I tell you again: This is a lie. This capability does not exist. Only two countries in the region possess, or are in the process of possessing, a nuclear capability: Israel and Pakistan. . . .

"Finally, a serious problem is that of our position with respect to the United States. To be a friend and ally does not imply allegiance. When the life of the United States was threatened by Cuba, General de Gaulle was the first to support Kennedy, but when it came to Vietnam, he gave his Phnom Penh address, which the Americans would do well to listen to."