

Report from Paris by Yves Messer

'Make the SDI irreversible'

Dr. Edward Teller asked a French audience to do so, and the country is now primed for a major public debate.

On June 24, the Futures Foundation, an opposition think-tank headed by RPR Deputy Jacques Baumel, organized a colloquium here on the issue of Europe's relationship to the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative. The conference marked a real turn in favor of the U.S. program by the RPR or Gaullist party, and by some elements in former President Giscard d'Estaing's UDF coalition, the two largest opposition parties. It occurred as these two parties published their respective "White Papers" on defense to open public debate on the issue.

RPR defense spokesman François Fillon, author of his party's White Paper, proposed French deployment of the neutron bomb, nuclear submarines, and also, anti-missile defense systems. The significance of this endorsement of the SDI is not to be underestimated. Even the promoter of the debate, Baumel, had declared only last year, in the June 23, 1984 edition of *Quotidien de Paris*, that SDI technology could not guarantee 100% efficiency against nuclear-missile attack, and therefore, a single missile passing through reduced the defense system's worth to zero.

But now, Baumel is supporting the SDI fully.

Dr. Edward Teller, so-called father of the H-bomb, opened the afternoon conference by telling the 400 persons present that "Star Wars" was a term invented by the *New York Times* to discredit President Reagan's initiative. The Soviet Union, he continued, already has a defense system which is

very efficient; hence, they are not interested in American proposals to share defensive technology.

In regard to European concerns, destroying short-range missiles is easier than destroying long-range ones, he asserted, and proposed to do so in their very last phase using small nuclear explosions, whose technology France has mastered.

He then appealed to European countries, including France, to join with the United States, not merely at the corporate level—as in the French Matra firm's receipt of subcontracts—but at the level of governments. The goal must be to make the program "irreversible," regardless of the next U.S. President, said Teller, which demands European help to obtain even partial results within the next few years. The audience applauded.

However, there was a clear division between actual supporters of a joint SDI program, and those who argue for an "independent" European initiative, often associated with President Mitterrand's "Eureka" proposal. In the first category were such figures as Prof. Marceau Felden, who, in an interview with the American *Fusion* magazine, stressed that, contrary to the "Eureka" project, the SDI is not only military, but civilian in that its spin-offs will revolutionize industry. He endorsed a proposal by his friend, Jean-Marie Caro, the president of the Western European Union, to create a "Department of New High Technologies," reminiscent of what de Gaulle did with the Commissariat à l'Énergie

Atomique (CEA).

Jean-Marie Daillet and François Fillon, the UDF and the RPR White Book authors, respectively, also supported joint U.S./European work, Fillon attacking the "Eureka" initiative; neither its funding nor manpower are known.

On the other hand, Marie-France Garaud, head of *Geopolitical Review*, endorsed a position quite similar to Mitterrand's. First, she insisted that Gen. Danny Graham's diversionary "High Frontier" project had to be considered the real forerunner of the SDI. And, in the last edition of her magazine, she wrote: "The great coming technological changes, whether we will it or not, is partially disarming us, and reinforcing the defensive precariousness of the European nations, resulting from their geographical situation"—i.e., rendering France's independent nuclear deterrent obsolete, and Europe more open to attack. The argument is a Soviet argument.

The only reason for space conquest, she continued, is that "it is attractive, and the good public will not understand anything of it, but will applaud it."

Mr. Fricaud-Chagnaud, the president of the Foundation for National Defense Studies, (FEDN) went further, saying that the real issue was what the U.S. President would do in a crisis. He totally rejected the idea that the SDI would change Mutually Assured Destruction into Mutually Assured Survival. Jean-Louis Gergorin, international affairs director for the Matra corporation, took a similar position.

In sum, with the initiative represented by this conference, France is about to see a major public debate, and, at minimum, a serious challenge to the government's pro-Soviet position.