

Report from Paris by Thierry Lalevée

Mitterrand's flight forward

French Socialists are dismantling the country's anti-terrorism apparatus, so as not to alienate the Soviets.

The French Socialist government of François Mitterrand chose the summer holidays to take several steps which are worrying not only the domestic republican opposition but also France's traditional neighbors and allies. Mitterrand has appointed Eric Rouleau, the former Middle East Editor of *Le Monde*, France's ambassador to strategically sensitive Tunisia. But perhaps even more important, was the July 31 announcement that Yves Bonnet, the director of France's main counterintelligence agency, the DST, has been put out to pasture.

Minister of the Interior Pierre Joxe did not give his reasons for his appointment of Yves Bonnet as prefect of the city of Quimper, in Brittany; but the signal was so obvious, he hardly needed to do so. For the last two years, Bonnet had been very successfully using the DST as a weapon against international terrorism and Soviet penetration of France. Working from an investigation begun under former president Giscard d'Estaing, in 1983 Bonnet managed to force the expulsion from France of no less than 40 Soviet diplomats, who were involved in a huge and well-ensconced spy ring. Bonnet's move tremendously displeased the Quai d'Orsay, then led by leading appeaser Claude Cheysson.

The expulsion of Soviet diplomats became an issue again in March 1985, when several French media celebrated the operation by providing hitherto unavailable details on the extent of Soviet penetration. This time, it was

the Minister of Industrial Redeployment, Edith Cresson, who became irked: The revelations came out only 24 hours before a meeting of the Franco-Soviet economic commission.

But the underlying reason behind the purge of Bonnet, as well as other members of the DST, is their so-called "American connection." True to his marxist past, Interior Minister Joxe is reported by the weekly *Le Point* to have been enraged over the continuous collaboration between the DST and American counterintelligence agencies in the fight against international terrorism, within the framework of the Anti-Terror Liaison Committee (CLAT), a special committee linking all police and counterintelligence agencies. With the CLAT's assistance, the DST had been able to systematically dismantle most of the Islamic and Iranian terror networks deployed into France—from the expulsion of Ahmed Ben Bella in January 1983, to the arrest in the winter of 1984 of the leaders of the "Lebanese Armed Revolutionary Fractions."

As the new head of the DST, the Socialists have installed Remy Pautrat. With no intelligence background, Pautrat's main qualification is having been on Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson's staff. According to intelligence sources, Pautrat's major task over the coming months may be to arrange the "disappearance" of some files that the Socialists would not like to see in the wrong hands, as well as to oversee current Socialist personnel and operations.

Meanwhile, orders have already come down that most of the DST's major operations against Moscow and its terrorists are to be curtailed, as a gesture of good will by the Socialists, who are involved in delicate anti-American negotiations with Moscow and its satraps.

Eric Rouleau's appointment as ambassador to Tunisia is coherent with this domestic shuffle. Rouleau (whose real name is Elie Rafall), was a founding member of the Egyptian Communist Party after the war, and became a mainstay of one of the Soviet KGB's essential operations from the 1950s up through 1978, the so-called "Solidarity" network founded by Egyptian Communist Henri Curiel.

Though direct connections between Rouleau and the Soviet KGB have never been confirmed, many consider him a "fellow-traveller." As such, he is barred from visiting some of the more sensitive official archives in the United States. His appointment has been sharply criticized in France and in Tunisia.

The Tunisian government, short of risking a major diplomatic crisis with Paris, had no choice but to accept Rouleau's installation. But it let it be known that this new ambassador "will be watched carefully."

Rouleau is also known for his close connections with Khomeini's Iran and Libya's Qaddafi. While a journalist, he mediated the summit between Qaddafi and Mitterrand in November 1984, with the support of Cheysson and Mitterrand's personal lawyer, the present Foreign Minister, Roland Dumas. Rouleau and Dumas have been friends since 1952.

Tunisia was already a major focus of discussions last year between Mitterrand and Qaddafi. At that time, both expressed their concern over the pro-American turn of Algeria and Tunisia.