

people there, like I mentioned to you Dr. Owen [Saro-wiwa]. In the U.S., I understand Richard Goldman also set up a foundation and paid into it \$20,000; all this we hear by way of information.

**Q:** But, in other words, that's not money that's coming into helping your group in Lagos?

**Nwido:** No.

**Q:** But at least the Body Shop and the Roddicks are keeping this organization going in London.

**Nwido:** Yes, at least. The Body Shop assisted to get us an office space. They are paying the rent; they pay for the electricity, and all communications, telephones, and fax machines; and they have given money in addition to this to keep the office going.

**Q:** So, do you think that that office is the biggest place in the West that is still functioning along the lines that Ken would have wanted it to function?

**Nwido:** No, I won't say that; the Ogoni struggle is here in Ogoni. We feed them all the information; like when the Ogoni Day took place on the 4th of January, they had to wait for us to hear what happened before they could act; all the people who were shot dead; and those who were shot, wounded, and detained; those who were released; all those sorts of information, they are depending on us for, before they can act at all. Once this information gets to them, then their job is to disseminate it to the world.

**Q:** So you then fax them information?

**Nwido:** Of course. I can't survive without a fax machine, that is my greatest asset here.

**Q:** At one point, Ken had made a fair amount of money hadn't he? I remember hearing that he had several companies?

**Nwido:** No, that's not true; he had just a single company. The other thing about him, though, was that he was a very skillful trader; he was a very prudent fellow, very technical. He went into buying and selling and made a lot of money from that point. The money he made this way, he then invested in the real estate market. So, then, the money used by his staff was rent from his houses. This is still how we survive. I do all that; I transact the business. We put it on a short deposit, and then the interest is what we use to run the office.

**Q:** So, you mean there is more than one house that you get rent from?

**Nwido:** Yes. We have a number of houses in Port Harcourt; we have a lot of houses elsewhere. You can do very well in real estate here. If you have some money to invest, bring it to me and I will direct you on how to make a lot of money. You can make a world of money within a short time.

## 'Mitterrand disease' infects the French political elites

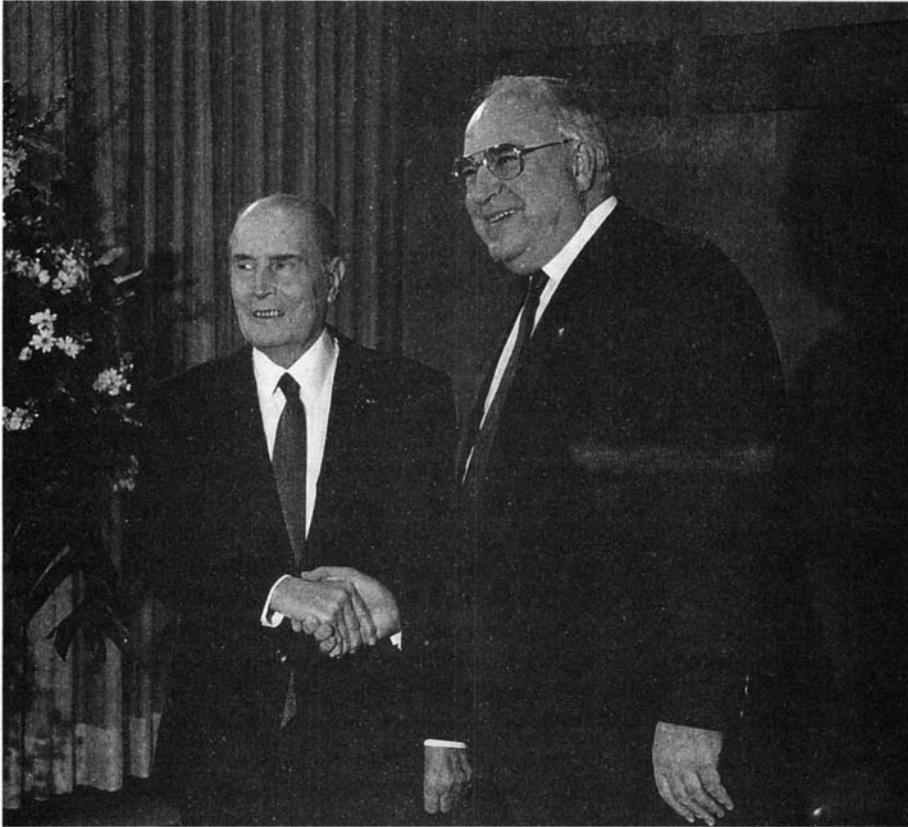
by Christine Bierre

François Mitterrand is dead. For weeks now, the French and international media have devoted their pages to the eulogies for the man who held on to the French Presidency for 14 years. Is there anything to add to what has already been said? Yes, indeed. For one thing, the great majority of the coverage of Mitterrand's political career has been very favorable. In France, left- and right-wing political figures formed a single chorus to mourn the dead President. Internationally, many were the leaders who, like Germany's Helmut Kohl, wept over Mitterrand's grave, in spite of the fact that Mitterrand often betrayed those, including in Germany, who were purportedly his friends. Mitterrand's attempts to undermine German reunification and to stop Germany from launching a powerful policy of industrial reconstruction of eastern Europe, are typical of his relations to his "friends." It is therefore useful to expose the evil that Mitterrand represented, and which he brought upon the French nation.

This is particularly important today for the French population and elites, who elected and tolerated Mitterrand for 14 years. What can explain the fascination of whole sectors of the French population with François Mitterrand? Why is it that for 14 years, Mitterrand enjoyed support that ranged from the far left to the far right? How is it possible that, in spite of the fact that Mitterrand betrayed the ideals of those who elected him, still a majority of Frenchmen continued to vote for him, and are mourning him now? Indeed, the mental disease of "Mitterrandism" has corrupted all those who play his game.

Ironically, this man will enter into oblivion sooner than many others. The reason is that Mitterrand didn't really accomplish anything: Other than lasting 14 years in power, which for some might be considered an accomplishment, Mitterrand's fans can only attribute to him some vague contribution toward "European construction."

The only thing Mitterrand did accomplish, was the destruction of everything that President Charles de Gaulle stood for, leaving France considerably weakened. The two pillars of Mitterrand's Europe are the Single Act, which opened the borders of European countries to deregulated



*French President François Mitterrand (left) often betrayed those who were purportedly his friends. For example, he stabbed Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl (right) in the back, by attempting to undermine German unification.*

financial transactions; and the Maastricht Treaty, a monetarist concoction committed to maintaining the supremacy of financial power over industrial investment. These policies are poles apart from de Gaulle's vision for Europe. They are now being more and more called into question throughout the European Union, and have already led the European economies to a situation of near-bankruptcy.

### **Debt and unemployment**

Internally, the total deregulation of financial activity brought about by Mitterrand, especially after 1983, is the main cause of the whopping, 12%-plus unemployment (one out of every four French workers is either unemployed, partially employed, or is participating in the government's unproductive make-work projects). Unemployment, in turn, is the main cause of the cancerous growth of indebtedness: The public deficit and debt have reached more than 5% and 60% of GNP, respectively, and are also dangerously high among the regional administrations, threatening the very existence of the banks that lend to those administrations.

The only thing that flourished during Mitterrand's era was financial and real estate speculation. France's centralized Colbertist system was turned away from its original purpose of promoting useful industrial investment, and reoriented toward financial speculation. Public banks such as

Crédit Lyonnais led the way in a decade of wild financial practices that were adopted by public- and private-sector banks alike, as well as insurance and reinsurance companies. The de facto bankruptcy of Crédit Lyonnais (which holds a debt of nearly 80 billion francs, roughly \$16 billion), as well as that of other major banks and insurance companies that are left holding an unpayable real estate debt evaluated at 300 billion francs, gives a brutally realistic image of what the Mitterrand era was all about. Just days after Mitterrand's death on Jan. 8, the Général des Eaux, one of the two infrastructural giants in the country, announced losses of 3.5 billion francs due to bad debts in the real estate sector.

Unemployment, insolvency, loss of sovereignty, corruption: This is the true heritage of Mitterrand and of those who governed with him.

### **A master of deceit**

A series of articles published by Régis Debray in the daily *Le Monde* following Mitterrand's death, are most insightful concerning the sickening practices by which Mitterrand gained and maintained power, practices which were accepted by Debray, Mitterrand's long-time adviser (to his great regret, now).

Debray has commented on the remarkable conservatism of Mitterrand, a man who, unlike de Gaulle, was unable to

change course and to create something new—a problem so long-standing in the French ideology, that it was immortalized by Jean Renoir in the film “The Rules of the Game.” Incapable of breaking with established policy, Mitterrand, a goldfish in his bowl, was constantly attempting to integrate two world outlooks which were completely at odds. Thus, his attempts during World War II to conciliate certain activities with the Resistance, while submitting to the Vichy regime and going as far as accepting a decoration, the Francisque, from Vichy puppet Gen. Philippe Pétain’s own hands. In the same manner, as “Socialist President,” he maintained pretensions to his party’s ideology, while adopting the worst practices of the world’s financial elites.

This was the basis for Mitterrand’s ability to please left and right-wing alike, by using the whole gamut of ideologies available to him in a fixed universe, to serve his infinite opportunism. Debray recounts the instructions given to him by Mitterrand for ghostwriting his speeches or interviews. He asked Debray to fake interviews that never took place—to the point of adding the “aahhs and oohhhs” in the right places. Even worse, Mitterrand demanded that the speeches written for him contain an argument on one page, and its opposite on the next! This is the key to the ambiguity of his speeches, which were consciously constructed to please people who were often at totally opposite ends of the political spectrum.

His speeches were never conceived as developing ideas or a coherent world outlook, but only as acts of seduction, says Debray. Commentaries made after his death present him as a literary figure and a highly cultivated man. On the contrary: What was striking in his speeches was the poverty of language, willfully limited to a simple vocabulary tailored for people he conceived of as the ignorant masses, as well as the poverty of the idea-content, the speech being reduced to small phrases pronounced to please this or that part of the electorate. Mitterrand ruled the country not as a political figure, but rather as a magician, a master manipulator of perception games, who created in everybody’s mind the illusion that the President had a policy for the country, which, in reality, he didn’t have.

Thus was also his method of governing. Debray recounts the elaborate system reminiscent of a medieval court by which Mitterrand controlled his advisers, manipulating them through the distribution of good and bad points, to the point of leading some to suicide. (Could this be a reference to the fate of former Prime Minister Pierre Bérégovoy, who lost the “favors of the king” in the months prior to his suicide?) Like the kings of former times, Mitterrand had his own rituals: Sunday evening meetings in his Parisian home, Pentecost at Solutre, Christmas at Latché. Be disinvented, and that meant you were three steps behind, a severe loss of favors which could destroy the lives of some.

At the height of the Greenpeace affair in 1986, when information was leaked to the press that the sinking of the Greenpeace boat in the Pacific had been done by French secret service agents, Mitterrand’s close advisers pressured him to

hold a meeting with all those in government having to deal with this affair. Debray recounts why such a meeting was the last thing that Mitterrand desired. In order to “divide and conquer,” Mitterrand only met people one by one, “*tête à tête*,” managing to give everybody the impression that the President shared their views entirely. Mitterrand avoided bringing people together in meetings, lest they discover what his real game was.

It was thus that Mitterrand created a spiderweb of perception in which people, including honest people, were trapped. Why did they accept this? Using his own example, and speaking quite openly of why he collaborated for so long with Mitterrand, Régis Debray indicates the attraction exerted by Mitterrand’s petty “Machiavellianism” (in reality Venetianism; Machiavelli had worked in the service of the great humanists of the Renaissance) with regard to the French intellectual, political, and artistic elites. Unable to transform the world, and having put himself under the orders of the worst of the world’s financial powers, Mitterrand’s petty Venetian manipulations nonetheless gave him and others the impression of power in the world. Debray indicates that the reason he did not support Pierre Mendès-France, the other most important figure of the left during the 1960s and a man reputed for his moral stance, was that Mendès-France was too moral and impotent, boring almost. Mitterrand alone, with his pragmatism, would be able to impose himself.

### The hatred of ideas

The problem lies in what Debray is honest enough to confess to have discovered, after a few years. He believed that Mitterrand was an intellectual, and he discovered that there was nothing that Mitterrand despised more than ideas. “I don’t like de Gaulle’s phrase, ‘I have a certain idea of France,’ Mitterrand stated several times, adding, ‘Me, I live France.’” Debray thought that Mitterrand would maneuver in the name of truth and ideals, but he discovered that Mitterrand was nothing *but* maneuvers, because he couldn’t care less about the truth. He believed Mitterrand was using form to better accomplish content, only to find out that there was nothing beyond the form.

Ideologically, this mentality is one of the main diseases to plague the French political elites today. While they all bow before the dictates of the international financial oligarchy, before the “markets” and the controlled media, these petty manipulations within the internal political scene, as well as toward the outside, give all an illusion of having some real power in the world—at least, until a financial crash of tremendous dimensions comes to prove to all these fools, that real “*virtu*,” real political courage, lies not in petty Venetian manipulations, but in the capacity to break with the rules of the game imposed by established authorities, and to act in the name of truth to create a better world. This remains, to this day, the best lesson we can learn from General de Gaulle.