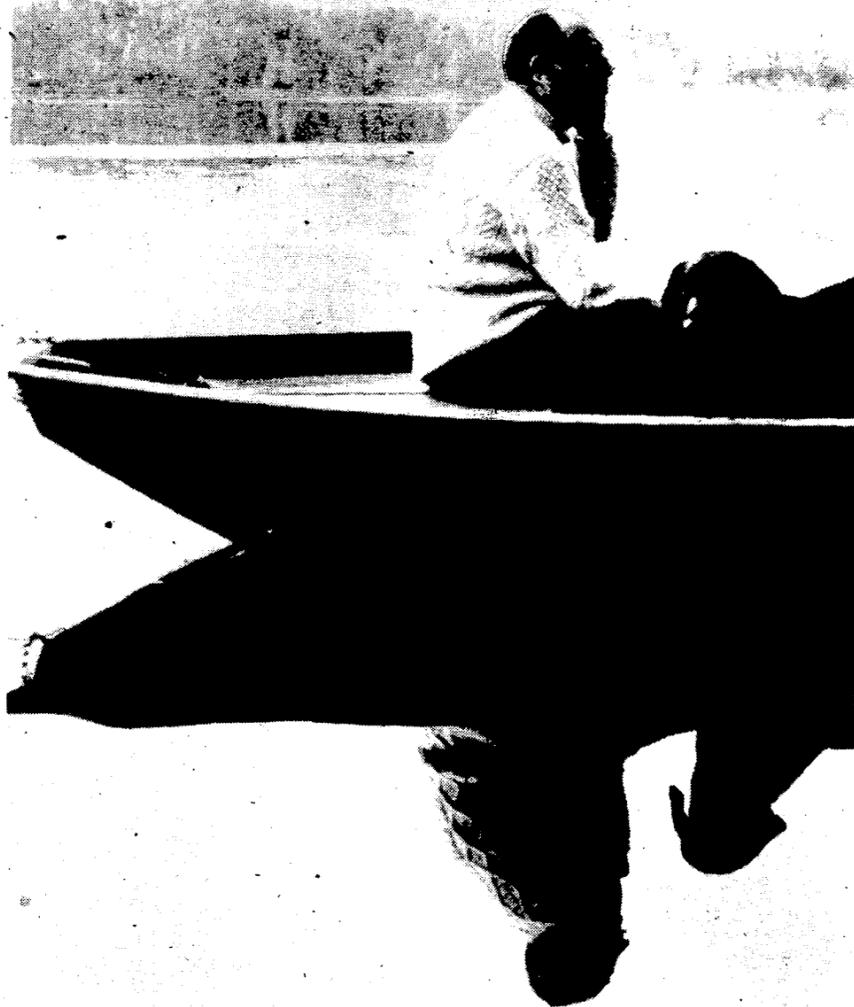


# IN THE WORLD



Francois Mitterrand has begun his presidency by trying to revive France's best democratic spirit.

## FRANCE

# Mitterrand begins to melt the cynicism

By Diana Johnstone

PARIS

UNTIL A FEW DAYS AGO, THE characteristic sound emitted by the species known as French leftist was a sort of unfunny dry laugh, which might be described as a cynical jeer. The species seemed permanently immune to a number of the world's illusions, such as tradition, ceremony, reverence for the dead, fine sentiments, romantic music, social democracy.

Thus it is all the more remarkable that on his inauguration day, Francois Mitterrand dared play out a solemn ritual combining all those targets for easy mockery in front of such an unpromising audience. He got away with it, in glory, only because his election is deeply felt by millions of people as an unexpected and perhaps undeserved liberation from a sort of creeping domestic restoration of the Nazi occupation. As the climax to his May 21 inauguration ceremonies, Mitterrand invented a ritual at the Pantheon that managed to express this feeling in symbolic terms.

The day began more conventionally. Mitterrand went to the Elysee Palace, where outgoing president Valery Giscard d'Estaing initiated him into the secrets of nuclear bomb button pushing. In an elegant little speech to a rather frosty group of notables assembled under the chandeliers, the new president then paid tribute to "those millions and millions of women and men, ferment of our people, who for two centuries, in peace and war, by their work and blood, have wrought the history of France without having access other than by brief and glorious fractures in our society."

He suggested that his election meant

that at long last the political majority would be durably identified with the social majority. "In the world of today, what higher exigency for our country than to achieve the new alliance of socialism and liberty, what finer ambition than to offer it to the world of tomorrow." The only winner of the May 10 elections was "hope," he declared, adding the wish that it might become "the most widely shared thing in France"—an allusion to Descartes' famous definition of reason.

By Diana Johnstone

PARIS

SINCE MITTERRAND WON, THERE is revived interest in every aspect of politics. His prime minister Pierre Mauroy's new cabinet was scrutinized eagerly by people who hadn't cared for years who was minister of what for clues to the landscape of a new phase of political combat.

Unlike the U.S., where non-partisan senior executives and strategists run the government whoever is elected, control over the powerful, centralized French state has changed hands completely, with 40 top posts filled by prominent Socialists. Underneath, of course, remain the career civil servants—many of whom have been lining up to join the P.S., some even offering to pay a couple of years back dues to give their official date

At the end of his hand-shaking at the Elysee Palace, Mitterrand stopped to embrace elder statesman Pierre Mendes-France, telling him: "If I am here today, it is thanks to you." Mendes-France was too overcome with emotion to reply. Together, the two men had gone into opposition 23 years ago against the politely arranged coup d'etat that brought General de Gaulle—and with him, the French right—to power for what almost seemed like forever.

In fitful rain, Mitterrand was then driven up the Champs-Elysees for the usual wreath-laying at the tomb of the unknown soldier under the *Arc de Triomphe*. The ceremony was demilitarized and internationalized by the presence of foreign guests, Mitterrand's friends from the Socialist International—Willy Brandt, Olof Palme, Felipe Gonzalez *et al.*—and writers such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez, James Baldwin, Arthur Miller. His guests also included the widows of Salvador Allende and Pablo Neruda.

In the afternoon came the original part. Mitterrand invited the "people of Paris" to join him in the heart of the Latin Quarter, in front of the Pantheon, tomb of the republic's "great men," a monument that seemed to have fallen forever into forgetfulness, if not ridicule. As the Paris orchestra thundered out the "hymn to joy" from Beethoven's ninth symphony, Francois Mitterrand detached himself from the crowd and walked calmly and purposefully, alone with the television cameras, into the vast edifice, where he stopped three times, to meditate and place a red rose on each of three tombs. First Jean Moulin, martyr of the Resistance. Then Victor Schoelcher, crusader for racial equality who wrote the act abolishing black slavery in 1848. And finally Jean Jaures, French socialist leader assassinated on the eve of World War I. After this solitary—but splendidly televised—visit to the dead, the new president then returned to the living, apparently plunged in thought and unperturbed by the rain that drenched him as Beethoven reached the end of his multiple climaxes and gave way to a rarely-performed spirited arrangement of the *Marseillaise* by Berlioz.

Mitterrand thus symbolically restored the republic, gathered the illustrious dead on his side and gave back meaning to words, gestures and traditions that had seemed gone forever. The amazing thing about this rite, obvious as it was, is that it worked. People young and old who had seemed plunged forever into cynicism were suddenly blessed with a fresh naivete. Even the pelting rain, which dispersed the street dances planned throughout the Latin Quarter, failed to spoil the mood. For the first time since June 1968, riot

police vanished from the Latin Quarter, and the few gendarmes in fancy ceremonial tassels fraternized with the gentle crowd. The Latin Quarter was liberated by Mitterrand, who continues to live there himself, in the picturesque rue de Bievre, going to the Elysee "like to the office." He still has to pay off a large mortgage on the rue de Bievre home. This is public knowledge because Mitterrand, in a gesture unprecedented in France, disclosed both his financial situation (modest) and his medical check-up (fine, thank you).

The rich Giscard family bought their historic roots by purchasing a noble family name, d'Estaing, that had run out of heirs after boasting a bastard of Louis XIV. Mitterrand, from a family with more culture than money, seeks his legitimacy in shared traditions of popular ideals.

It's easy to dismiss this as demagoguery. But one of Mitterrand's first acts as President was to go against the vast majority of public opinion (according to all polls) by sparing a young convicted murderer from the guillotine. Public attitudes are still largely conditioned by fears instilled by the creeping police state of his predecessor. The liberation celebrated by the left has yet to be digested by the more timid and conventional half of the population.

Another test of principle is treatment of immigrant workers, politically voiceless and terrorized into silent indifference by the Giscard regime. One of the Socialist government's first measures was to suspend all expulsions. Children of immigrants, often jobless and threatened with expulsion to countries whose languages they can't speak, were assured that "their country is France." Simon Malley, editor of the anti-imperialist weekly *Afrique-Asie*, who was expelled from France several months ago despite massive protests from civil libertarians and African heads of state, is back in Paris. Young blacks will be able to take the metro with hope of making their appointments on time instead of being held up for endless, degrading "identity checks."

These little nothings explain the changed mood of the French left. Political alienation has its bitter comforts, of being always right and always helpless, which the French left has experienced fully in recent years and is ready to forego. The all-or-nothing mood has faded, because people have had their taste of nothing and are ready to settle for something, or the hope of something, the chance to work for something. The French left is rejoicing not because, with the election of Mitterrand, its political battles have been won, but because now they can begin. ■

## CABINET

# A new breed promises change

By Diana Johnstone

PARIS

SINCE MITTERRAND WON, THERE is revived interest in every aspect of politics. His prime minister Pierre Mauroy's new cabinet was scrutinized eagerly by people who hadn't cared for years who was minister of what for clues to the landscape of a new phase of political combat.

Unlike the U.S., where non-partisan senior executives and strategists run the government whoever is elected, control over the powerful, centralized French state has changed hands completely, with 40 top posts filled by prominent Socialists. Underneath, of course, remain the career civil servants—many of whom have been lining up to join the P.S., some even offering to pay a couple of years back dues to give their official date



France's new Prime Minister, Pierre Mauroy

of membership a less opportunistic look. But in the last days of the old regime, the moving vans and incinerators worked full time at the most sensitive ministries, where the newcomers found the cupboards bare of secrets.

The Ministry of Interior, main beehive of intrigue with responsibility for the police, was handed over to old-time Socialist mayor of Marseilles Gaston Defferre, 70, who was definitely not born yesterday and may be the only socialist tough and experienced enough to figure out who is up to what and actually take control. As Minister of State, Defferre is also in charge of the new function of "Decentralization," which should be a comfort to local notables.

Four other cabinet members have been given the top protocol rank of Minister of State, both to emphasize new priorities (the traditional top ministries of Defense, Justice, Finance and External Relations are correspondingly downgrad-

## AFRICA

## Overtures to the underdogs

By Diana Johnstone

PARIS

**A** WEEK-LONG CONFERENCE on sanctions against South Africa held at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, punctuated by Africa Day ceremonies May 23 celebrating the 18th birthday of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), provided a perfect occasion for the Socialist government to unveil its Africa policy before an appreciative audience.

Socialist Party (PS) first secretary Lionel Jospin opened the conference with a strong condemnation of South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia. Jospin reiterated PS policy calling on the French government to reduce imports from South Africa, end all public investment and stop aiding private investment there. He also called for an embargo on arms to South Africa, as well as support to the "front line" countries of southern Africa and to black liberation movement militants and refugees. As party leader with no official government role, Jospin could go much farther than the new External Relations Minister Claude Cheysson, who did not attend the sanctions meeting. This discretion was understood to be dictated by France's position within the "contact group" (along with the U.S., Britain, Canada and West Germany) supposed to wheedle Pretoria into a Namibian settlement in line with UN resolutions.

But Cheysson spoke at the African Day ceremonies, promising that from now on France would give diplomatic and political support to all those struggling for human dignity and democracy. He condemned racism and expressed gratitude to immigrant workers for their contribution to the French economy. These words made an impression because Africans already know and respect Cheysson. As European Commissioner, he helped negotiate the Lome accords regulating trade between Africa and the Common Market. He has an unusually thorough knowledge of African countries, problems and leaders. At the UNESCO meeting, Cheysson exchanged warm greetings with president Sam Nujoma of the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO).

Envious diplomats from other Western countries privately made predictably sour comments about French exploitation of Socialist rhetoric. But Cheysson's credibility with Africans rests on more than words. They know he firmly believes that Europe's future depends on

ed, at least formally; and to flatter certain ambitions. A newly-created Ministry of National Solidarity covering all social welfare departments is entrusted to Nicole Questiaux, of the left CERES faction of the P.S. She sees her job as defense of rights people have won in historic struggles. The first decisions taken by the new government at its first cabinet meeting were to raise the minimum wage (probably by 10 percent) and substantially to increase (perhaps by 25 percent) family allocations, old age pensions and payments to handicapped people. Measures will also be taken to lower optional retirement age to 60 and create structures to assure that young people between the ages of 16 and 21 are not left unemployed.

Next comes Michel Jobert, 60, eccentric left-wing Gaullist and former foreign minister, named Minister of Foreign Trade to reassure business circles and above all the Arabs, with whom he has excellent relations, and who could wreck French finances if they suddenly withdrew their billions in investment capital from France.

The other two Ministers of State are the two young rival heirs to the socialist throne, Michel Rocard, 50, who wanted to run for president instead of Mitter-

establishing new kinds of relations with Africa.

The new approach was announced by downgrading the formerly powerful, free-wheeling Cooperation Ministry—in practice the ministry of African colonies—and putting it under supervision of the Quai d'Orsay. The new delegate minister in charge of cooperation, Jean-Pierre Cot, 42, is perhaps the French Socialist with the most friends in Washington. Maybe part of his job will be to convince the Americans that Paris' new policy is the best way to counter Soviet in-

tradition with the more generous positions taken by the Socialist International headed by Willy Brandt.

The comparison is appropriate, but there are solid reasons to expect that the system will work differently in its French version. For one thing, France is a leading power in Africa, with means to carry out an independent policy, which Bonn lacks. For another, the French socialists, for all their differences, share ideas about economic policy that are still rare in the German Social Democratic Party. The state has far more control of such mat-



Socialist Party first secretary Lionel Jospin, in one of his first official acts, has asserted his party's support for Black Africa.

fluence in Africa.

French diplomacy from now on can benefit from the flexibility of having two foreign policies towards the Third World: the militantly progressive policy of the Socialist International expressed by Jospin, and the more cautious official government policy of Cheysson. Connoisseurs of social democratic treachery will spot the precedent: West Germany, where the conservative foreign policy of the Bonn government headed by Helmut Schmidt has been in constant con-

trast with the more generous positions taken by the Socialist International headed by Willy Brandt.

French diplomacy from now on can benefit from the flexibility of having two foreign policies towards the Third World: the militantly progressive policy of the Socialist International expressed by Jospin, and the more cautious official government policy of Cheysson. Connoisseurs of social democratic treachery will spot the precedent: West Germany, where the conservative foreign policy of the Bonn government headed by Helmut Schmidt has been in constant con-

trast with the more generous positions taken by the Socialist International headed by Willy Brandt.

trast with the more generous positions taken by the Socialist International headed by Willy Brandt.

trast with the more generous positions taken by the Socialist International headed by Willy Brandt.

trast with the more generous positions taken by the Socialist International headed by Willy Brandt.

trast with the more generous positions taken by the Socialist International headed by Willy Brandt.

trast with the more generous positions taken by the Socialist International headed by Willy Brandt.

trast with the more generous positions taken by the Socialist International headed by Willy Brandt.

trast with the more generous positions taken by the Socialist International headed by Willy Brandt.

tory solution may be worked out to the Chad imbroglio.

The PS has issued a paper spelling out its position on several controversies in sub-Saharan Africa. It supports the Polisario in the Western Sahara. It also supports the Eritrean people's right to self-determination, but favors a solution guaranteeing Ethiopia's access to the sea, and expresses sympathetic interest in Ethiopia's revolution. Regarding the Indian Ocean, the PS declares that "any attempt to integrate the South African naval base at Simonstown into the Western military camp would be a very grave threat to peace in that area."

In general, the PS blames the government of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing for creating crisis by its "contempt for the right of people to decide for themselves" and then rushing in with military intervention to solve problems of its own making. The French Socialists are alarmed at the Reagan administration's evident desire to gang up with South Africa against Angola.

The PS considers the USSR just as self-serving as other great powers, but grants that its policy in Africa has so far been law-abiding, and attributes its interventions to "gross blunders or cowardice on the part of the Western powers." PS secretary for international affairs Veronique Neiertz hopes to give Africans an opportunity to "escape from the logic of Yalta, that is from alignment with one or the other of the two blocs."

To this end, Neiertz would very much like to see Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe join the Socialist International. On the other hand, French and other European socialist parties take a dim view of the "Socialist Inter-African" association recently founded by Senegalese ex-president Leopold Sedar Senghor and Tunisian president Habib Bourguiba, apparently in an attempt to create their own African version of the Socialist International. The countries and parties showing interest were much too conservative to suit the SI.

African students in Paris are seeing their futures brighten. Whereas Giscard tended to back the most corrupt African leaders, the Socialists are expected to throw their weight behind enlightened and democratic elites. Africans are not particularly afraid of the Russians and appreciate their support of liberation movements, but experience has shown that the USSR has little else to offer.

There are 165 French companies doing highly profitable business in South Africa, with investments of some eight billion francs. The conflict between those interests and socialist principles is obviously not going to be resolved all at once or all in favor of principle. The most immediate result of the policy change is that France will refuse to provide enriched uranium for South Africa's first nuclear power plant in Koeberg, which could hold up its operation for several years until the South Africans perfect their own enriching process.

ed Minister Delegate for youth and sports.

Several ministries in the social field, notably Labor, Health and Housing, have been assigned to lesser lights of the Socialist Party who may be merely keeping the chairs warm for Communists to be brought into the government after the two-round legislative elections June 14 and 21. Only the most fanatic anti-communist could be upset by, say, a woman communist minister of health, or a communist minister of labor to keep the workers quiet.

But Communist entrance into the government depends on this month's elections and meeting certain conditions. Socialist leader Lionel Jospin has insisted that the PCF must revise its position on the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, if it hopes to sit in the cabinet. This means a hearty helping of crow for Georges Marchais, who roundly insulted Socialist Pierre Joxe at a Moscow press conference last year, calling Joxe an "insolent twerp" for asking the PCF to clarify its position on Afghanistan. Ironically, Joxe, 45, is one of the P.S.'s few out-and-out Marxists and a leading defender of left unity between the P.S. and the PCF. Even more ironically, Joxe now occupies the cabinet post, Minister of Industry, that Marchais has always wanted. ■