

ARE THE FRENCH PRO ARAB?

The victory of Francois Mitterand as President of France appeared to many as signalling a more positive attitude toward Israel on the part of the French government. On the basis of his statements during the election campaign and to French Jewish leaders, it was anticipated that Mitterand would also reverse the policy of his predecessor, Valery Giscard d'Estaing, in supplying Arab countries with sophisticated arms and especially, enriched uranium to Iraq.

These hopes were quickly dispelled when the new Foreign Minister, Claude Cheysson, announced that the new Administration will honor all existing arms contracts and deliver all underwritten equipment. He branded as "lies" reports that France might cancel some of its existing arms contracts. The signal to the Arabs was clear: they need not fear an anti-Arab policy. At the same time, Mitterand responded to an invitation from Premier Menachem Begin of Israel for him to visit Israel that he would do so "when circumstances allow." Apparently, the French President is in no hurry to buddy up to Begin.

To assure that all his political flanks are covered, the new Socialist President appointed a Cabinet which includes a number of opponents of Israel. One of them is Michel Jobert, who is considered as one of the staunchest pro-Arab, anti-Israeli political figures in France. Another is Michel Rocard, who recently met with Palestine Liberation Organization chief Yasir Arafat in Beirut and reviewed a PLO guard of honor. Another is Jean-Pierre Chevènement, who is known as a warm supporter of Palestinian state aspirations.

There are, to be sure, several Cabinet members who are friends of Israel. But given the weight and influence of the Foreign Minister, Mitterand's own assurances since becoming President that he will honor all international agreements and contracts signed by previous Administrations, it appears that Giscard's policy is being implemented albeit in Socialist phraseology.

The basic motivation for this is not a moral commitment to previous agreements but to economic necessity. France has traditionally been one of the main arms suppliers to the Arab world. The Arabs also have between 30 - 50 billions francs (\$6 - \$9 billion) deposited with French banks or invested in French enterprises. When push comes to shove, economics is a far more potent factor in international diplomacy than is morality.

Prof. Henry Higgins, in the Broadway musical, "My Fair Lady," intoned: "The French don't actually care what they do, so long as they pronounce it correctly." The correct pronunciation for Mitterand's policy in the Middle East is: Channel de Oil.

JEWISH HERO TO GET CITIZENSHIP

WASH. (WNS) -- Two subcommittees of the House Foreign Affairs Committee recommended for approval a bill granting honorary United States citizenship to Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who rescued 100,000 Hungarian Jews from the Nazis.

The bill also calls on the Soviet Union which is believed to be holding Wallenberg ever since he was arrested by the

Red Army in Budapest in January 1945, to reveal Wallenberg's whereabouts and to free him. This would be only the second time Congress has granted honorary citizenship to a foreigner. The only such grant was to Winston Churchill.

Rep. Tom Lantos (D. Calif.) who sponsored the bill and who himself was rescued by Wallenberg when he was 16 years old, told the joint meeting

of the Subcommittees on Europe and the Middle East and Human Rights and International Organizations, that Secretary of State Alexander Haig has assured him that President Reagan supports the legislation.

The Administration however did not send a representative to the meetings. It did though send a message that the Administration does not object to the bill, but added that by giving Wallenberg honorary citizenship, "does not confer on the United States any new international legal right, duty or privilege on which

basis to confront the Soviets on their indefensible incarceration of Wallenberg." However, the Administration stressed that the action "would serve to underscore the seriousness in which the American government and the people view Soviet behavior in the Wallenberg case."

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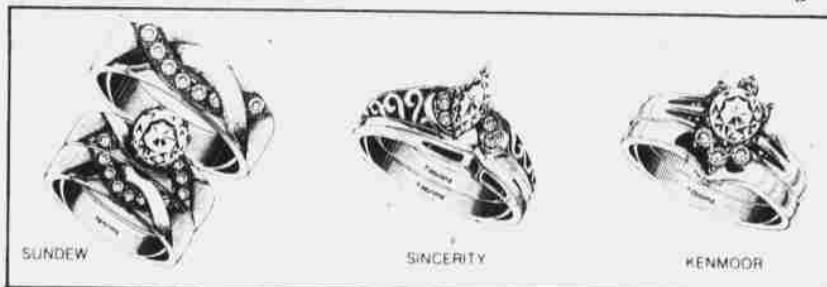
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