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FROM DE GAULLE TO MITTERAND

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Soviet ties with France, more than those with any other country in the postwar era, have been influenced by the vision of one individual--General Charles de Gaulle. He established the structure of postwar Franco-Soviet relations, and his approach and successes became the standard against which subsequent relations would be judged. Of course, the Kremlin has also influenced the development of relations between Moscow and Paris. But France is only one of several West European countries of significance to the USSR, and it has by no means always been the most important one. By contrast, the Soviet Union has played a major role in the restoration of French credibility and influence in the world after 1945.

Franco-Soviet relations have always had a pragmatic, instrumental, at times cynical quality to them. They have lacked the intensity, mutual fear and admiration and occasionally fiery rhetoric that have characterized the Kremlin's relations with its other major West European interlocutor, the Federal Republic of Germany. The Soviet Union has been more detached about France, for quite comprehensible geographic and political reasons. After all, the last time France invaded Russia was in 1812 and, since Napoleon's unsuccessful foray, France and Russia have been on the same side in most European wars, with the exception of the Crimean War and the initial period of the Nazi-Soviet Pact.

Indeed, France has never presented the same dangers--or the same opportunities--to the Soviet Union as has Germany. The West German-Soviet relationship revolves round what the late Arnold Wolfers termed "possession goals", involving essential bilateral issues of territory, population and the legitimacy of Eastern Europe. Franco-Soviet ties, by contrast, are primarily about "milieu goals", that is, the attempt to alter the broader European or transatlantic environment; but they do not involve basic issues of national survival and security.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Pierre Hassner, "Western European Perceptions of the USSR," *Daedalus* Winter, 1979, vol. 108, No. I, PP 113-151.

France is important to the Soviet Union for three reasons. First, it plays a role in Soviet containment policies toward the Federal Republic of Germany. Moscow has viewed Paris as the alternative *interlocuteur privilegé* when its relationship with Bonn was unsatisfactory. Moreover, it has sought to play France and Germany off against each other calculating that both countries were interested in cultivating their own exclusive ties with the Soviet Union . The Kremlin has also traditionally sought to exploit French fears of resurgent German nationalism , seeking to divide France and Germany. The worst nightmare for the Soviet leadership is a strong Franco-German alliance, especially in its military guise, leading a strong, united Western Europe.

Second, France , as the traditional *enfant terrible* of the Atlantic Alliance, has been useful for the Soviets in their overall endeavor to weaken NATO. Of course, they have had no control over French policies; but de Gaulle's withdrawal of France from NATO's integrated military command and the disputes that both he and his successors have had with the United States have endeared them to the Kremlin. On the other hand, the French commitment to the *force de frappe* and more recent recalcitrance about American enthusiasm for arms control have reminded Moscow that not all French disagreements with the United States facilitate Soviet policies.

Finally, the Soviet Union has had some interest in French domestic politics, in particular, in the fortunes of the French Communist Party (PCF) which, until it came into office in the Mitterrand government from 1981 to 1984, was able to command anywhere from 15 to 25 percent of the electoral votes. On one level, the Soviet Union has encouraged the growth of the PCF, because it has served to legitimize Soviet-style communism in a Western capitalist country. On the other hand, its quarrels with Moscow during the 1970's, and the Kremlin's clear preference for conservative governments after de Gaulle, have complicated the relationship, and today, the Kremlin is less interested in the PCF than it used to be.

The major significance of the Soviet Union for France has been its contribution toward the re-establishment of France's postwar global role and de Gaulle's own pursuit of national *grandeur*. Moreover, France has used its relationship with the USSR to enhance its bargaining leverage with both the United States and West Germany. For both countries, therefore, there are few issues of direct bilateral concern. The relationship is really concerned with the means toward broader multilateral ends.

#### THE DE GAULLE LEGACY.

Franco-Soviet relations reached their peak more than twenty years ago. The Soviets still write about the relationship with de Gaulle in glowing terms, often giving the impression that the Kremlin and the Elysee have never been able to recapture the heyday of the Gaullist years. The French are also acutely conscious of the standards that de Gaulle set and of the difficulty of recapturing them. In his memoirs, Valery Giscard d'Estaing recalls that, in 1974, when Brezhnev cancelled a meeting with him because of ill health, the French delegation was outraged. No Soviet leader, they argued, "would have dared to do that to de Gaulle."<sup>2</sup>

What are the main elements of the Gaullist legacy that his three successors have tried to live up to? Some, of course, were unique to de Gaulle's personal history, because his experiences with Russia just after the revolution and during the Second World War had a major impact on the development of his world view. In 1917, as a German prisoner of war, he was interned with a young imperial general, Mikhail Tukhashevskii, who later on joined the Bolsheviks and eventually fell victim to Stalin's purges. During the 1920 Polish-Russian war, de Gaulle was attached to a Polish fighting unit battling the Red Army. The young de Gaulle was impressed by two things: Tukhashevskii's ability, in the name of the Russian motherland, to switch loyalties from the Tsars to the Bolsheviks; and the failure of the Polish workers to respond to the Bolshevik appeal. National consciousness, he concluded, was far more

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<sup>2</sup>Valery Giscard D'Estaing, *Le Pouvoir et la Vie*, (Paris: Compagnie 12, 1988) p. 45.

important than class consciousness, and France would be able one day to come to an accommodation with Russia, irrespective of the role of Bolshevism.

During the war, the Soviets established cordial relations with de Gaulle and at times supported him in their bargaining with Britain and the United States, although Stalin could be quite scathing about him in private. The December 1944 Franco-Soviet alliance was described by a leading French politician as "the dazzling sign of French grandeur reconquered."<sup>3</sup> Yet shortly thereafter, Stalin played a major role in excluding France from the Yalta Conference, a snub that greatly affected the General's subsequent view of East-West relations. It is instructive that in later years, he blamed the Anglo-Saxons for denying France a say in the postwar settlement, whereas the Soviets had been no more kindly disposed toward him.

After establishing the Fifth Republic, de Gaulle's major foreign policy mission was to re-establish France's power and overcome the Cold War, pursuing the vision of a reunited Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals, free of American domination, with an independent nuclear deterrent to ensure France's autonomy and influence. Hence his withdrawal from NATO and his veto of British membership of the Common Market, steps applauded by Moscow. Ultimately, the Soviet Union responded to his Ostpolitik because it represented a major challenge to U.S. interests and a preferred alternative to Germany, which refused to recognize the postwar geographic or political status quo. But, even though both sides were using the relationship for their own purposes, their bilateral detente was a source of internal strength to the leadership in both countries.

De Gaulle's 1966 visit to the USSR, the first official trip by a Western head of state, marked the end of the virtual Western isolation of the Soviet Union and increased its international prestige. Conversely, the visit also enhanced de Gaulle's status, allowing him to claim that he alone of all Western statesmen had a privileged relationship with the West's

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<sup>3</sup>Cited in A. W. de Porte, *De Gaulle's Foreign Policy, 1944-1946*. (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1986) p. 80.

major antagonist. The visit also enhanced his prestige domestically, since at that time the French intelligentsia was largely sympathetic to the Soviet Union and critical of what they viewed as primitive American anti-communism. The Franco-Soviet rapprochement produced a variety of concrete agreements on mutual consultation and technical cooperation that formed the nucleus of an elaborate set of institutions which has provided the long-term framework for Franco-Soviet relations.

Although Franco-Soviet ties deteriorated during de Gaulle's last year in power--a result of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the increasing Soviet focus on West Germany and the General's growing domestic problems-- the legacy of his era endures. It is both one of symbolism and of reality; both political and economic. France, as the Soviets never tire of explaining, was the pioneer in detente and de Gaulle's policies paved the way for the development of a broader European detente in the 1970's.

#### **FROM DE GAULLE TO MITTERRAND**

Ironically, the development of European detente which de Gaulle had helped facilitate ultimately diminished France's importance for the Soviet Union. The broadening of detente, and particularly the Soviet-West German rapprochement, lessened France's uniqueness. Yet, the bilateral institutional and consultative structures established by de Gaulle continued to function and were strengthened under Georges Pompidou and Valery Giscard d'Estaing. Annual summits, a growing economic relationship and a variety of scientific and cultural exchanges consolidated the Franco-Soviet dialogue during these years. Moreover, despite Bonn's increased significance for the Kremlin, Moscow continued to court Paris and to play on its suspicions of the German government.

Under Pompidou, the Kremlin realized that France would no longer be the catalyst for the breakup of NATO or for the weakening of the Common Market. France, rejecting the Gaullist approach toward military doctrine, accepted a modified version of NATO's flexible

response doctrine and engaged in what amounted to a policy of selective military cooperation with NATO. Moreover, Pompidou approved of Britain's entry into the Common Market.

However, during the last months of Pompidou's life, French policy became more palatable to the Soviet Union, because France was once again playing the role of *enfant terrible* within the Atlantic Alliance. France was highly critical of both the Strategic Arms Limitation (SALT) and the Mutual Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) negotiations which, in its view, weakened the American nuclear guarantee to Europe and prejudiced the *force de frappe*. Although French anger was directed against both superpowers, Paris' policies were more troublesome for Washington than for Moscow. The Kremlin focused on French opposition to U.S. policies more than its criticism of the Soviet Union, particularly after France disrupted America's plans for a common front among Western energy consumers in 1974. Moreover, France, alone of all major Western countries, refused to criticize Soviet repression of dissidents, nor did it offer asylum to the recently-exiled author Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

During the Presidency of Giscard d'Estaing, "the least Gaullist of de Gaulle's successors", as Pierre Hassner describes him, France acquired a new significance for the Soviet Union. Its main importance was no longer as a disruptive force in the Atlantic Alliance. Instead, as U.S.-Soviet detente unravelled, France was the only major European country that remained committed to improved ties with Moscow and refused to follow the United States in imposing penalties on the USSR after the invasion of Afghanistan. Giscard's "pilgrimage" (to use *L'Express'* term) to Warsaw in May 1980, to meet with the ailing Brezhnev after the invasion of Afghanistan represented a clear snub to Washington, in its attempts to coordinate a Western response to the invasion, and a welcome boost for Soviet prestige. Moreover, France not only refused to support economic sanctions against the Soviet Union but even took up contracts from American companies that the U.S. government had vetoed. Giscard, more explicitly than other West European statesmen, affirmed that detente must be "divisible" and

that events in a far-away backward Moslem nation should not threaten the delicately spun web of East-West ties in Europe.

Other aspects of Giscard's policies--his growing cooperation with NATO, his support for an enlarged European Community, the further revision of military doctrine away from the Gaullist ideal of "defense tous azimuts" ,and above all, his close personal ties to German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and the growing Franco-German cooperation in all fields, including the military-- did not endear him to Moscow. However, his commitment to preserve detente was the most important factor for an ageing and increasingly sclerotic Soviet leadership.

#### THE MITTERRAND YEARS

Ever since de Gaulle, the Kremlin has confronted a dilemma between ideology and Realpolitik that is unique to its ties with Western Europe because of the strength of the PCF and the importance of France, namely the choice between good relations with the French government and the communist party. Moscow has --often quite openly--favored the ruling center-right coalition over the communist party or a communist-socialist alliance in presidential and parliamentary elections. Better a predictable bourgeois government than an unpredictable left-of-center coalition that could prove counterproductive for Franco-Soviet ties and for the USSR's relations with other Western countries.

Francois Mitterrand was well aware of the Soviet preference for conservative governments in France. In the 1974 and 1981 presidential elections, Moscow had clearly favored Giscard. In *L'Abeille et L'architect* ,he describes his first trip to Moscow in 1975 and a spirited discussion with hard-line ideologists Mikhail Suslov and Boris Ponomarev. The debate was ostensibly about the parallels between the current Portuguese situation and Weimar and whether the socialists were at fault for not preventing the rise of Hitler. Mitterrand remarks prophetically



Something told me that this incident was meant as a warning that we should not have too many illusions as to the fate Moscow would mete out to the Union of the Left in France. The hour had not yet struck for a truce between the Second and Third International, between the two separated factions of the working-class, between communism and socialism.<sup>4</sup>

When Mitterrand won the 1981 election and offered four cabinet posts to communists, there was consternation both in Washington and Moscow. The United States feared that the inclusion of communists in the government might compromise Western security. The Soviet Union was wary of a socialist government that might be more influenced by ideology than its more technocratic predecessor; and it was concerned about the effect that a period in government might have on the PCF, with whom its relations, at least for part of the 1970's, had been quite tense. It turned out that the Kremlin's fears were more justified than those of the White House. The communists' credibility, and not NATO's security, was compromised. During its period in government, the PCF halved its electoral support.

Mitterrand's own political and intellectual evolution had taken him from opposition to the force de frappe, condemnation of de Gaulle's withdrawal from NATO and some sympathy for the Soviet Union to support for the French nuclear deterrent, commitment to remain outside NATO's integrated military command and increasing criticism of the Soviet Union. His distaste with the Soviet system was a reflection of the general public disillusionment with the corruption and increased repression of Soviet-style socialism. The French intelligentsia was belatedly discovered the Gulag. Nevertheless, Mitterrand remained critical of American "imperialism" and supportive of left-wing third-world movements. Therefore, the Kremlin, casting the most favorable light on what it knew of Mitterrand, might have expected a socialist who would condemn American and Soviet imperialism, but would still remain committed to the detente of his predecessors.

I shall discuss Franco-Soviet relations under Mitterrand in four areas: bilateral ties, Mitterrand's Westpolitik, Franco-German relations and French domestic politics.

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<sup>4</sup>Francois Mitterrand, *The Wheat and the Chaff* (New York :Seaver Books/Lattes, 1982)p. 156

Eventually , Mitterrand's foreign policy did become "Gaullism by any other name", in Stanley Hoffmann's words. However, during Mitterrand's first three years, he adopted a far harder line toward the Soviet Union than had any of his predecessors in the Fifth Republic. Rejecting Giscard's policy of *le dialogue pour le dialogue*, he made it clear that there could be no normalization of relations between France and the Soviet Union as long as the Russians occupied Afghanistan. He also announced that the annual summits inaugurated under Pompidou could not continue unless the Soviet withdrew from Afghanistan. Moreover, in contrast to Giscard's virtual silence on the issue, Mitterrand enthusiastically supported the NATO Two-Track decision to deploy Pershing and Cruise missiles in Europe and announced that the deployment of Soviet SS-20 missiles represented a major threat to Western security. The French government was also verbally critical of the imposition of martial law in Poland, although it took no concrete actions against either the Poles or the Soviets.

From 1981 to 1984, the Kremlin was cast in the role of persistent suitor spurned by the Elysee. The Soviet press stressed the positive elements in the relationship--which, at that time, were almost exclusively economic--but nothing could mask the deterioration of relations. This was a period of virtual Kremlin paralysis, with the Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko successions, and little foreign policy initiative. After the April 1983 French expulsion of 47 Soviet spies, the Soviet press became increasingly critical; yet a major book published in 1984, celebrating sixty years of diplomatic relations, concluded, "There are no objective reasons for friction or discord between the French and Soviet peoples. There are no territorial or other contradictions between us." <sup>5</sup>

The deterioration in Franco-Soviet ties to their lowest ebb in the Fifth Republic was due to French, rather than Soviet, actions, although the Soviet Union's own domestic weakness meant that Moscow was largely reactive and had little policy of its own. The relationship must

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<sup>5</sup>Yu. V. Borisov, *SSSR-Frantsia: 60 Let Diplomaticheskikh Otnoshenii* (Moscow:Mezhdunarodnie Otnosheniie, 1984)

be viewed in the context of domestic French politics and the European and transatlantic environment.

Mitterrand was well aware that, because there were communists in his government, he had to counteract American and German fears about France's reliability as an ally. After all, their trust was indispensable for economic as well as security reasons.<sup>6</sup> And he had considerable domestic support for an anti-Soviet stance among those for whom Solzhenitsyn, and not Sartre, was the new prophet. Moreover, he was genuinely concerned about growing Soviet strategic power in Europe and feared that the East-West balance was tilting dangerously Eastward. Finally, the West German public's flirtation with pacifism, neutralism, nationalism and anti-Americanism in the final year of the Schmidt-Genscher government also convinced him of the need to anchor the West Germans firmly in the West.

Even before Gorbachev took over, these conditions had changed, enabling Mitterrand to return to a more traditional Gaullist relationship with the Soviet Union. The communists left the government in 1984, the deployment of American missiles in Europe went ahead, and the conservative Helmut Kohl was elected. Despite continuing neutralist and anti-nuclear sentiment among the population, West Germany appeared once again to be firmly embedded in the Western alliance. However, the new, detente-oriented Mitterrand, unlike his predecessors, did not remain silent on domestic Soviet issues when he finally visited Moscow in June 1984. During a Kremlin banquet, he publicly mentioned the human-rights activist and Nobel Laureate Andrei Sakharov, then under house arrest in Gorkii, causing his nonplused interpreter to stop and ask in French: did Monsieur le President really want his words translated? The answer was a clear yes.

Although France had signalled the end of its quarantine of the Soviet Union, it was not until Gorbachev came to power that Franco-Soviet ties began to warm. Since March, 1985, the

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<sup>6</sup>Pierre Hassner, "France and the Soviet Union", in ed. Michael Mandelbaum, *Western Approaches to the Soviet Union*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1988) p.43.

improvement in Franco-Soviet relations has been as much a product of Soviet as of French policies. With his appealing, yet undefined concept of "Europe, our common house", an integral part of "new political thinking", Gorbachev launched a more active, dynamic policy toward Western Europe. Relations with West Germany were not to improve until after Kohl's re-election in January 1987. But he chose France for his first Western summit in October 1985, using the occasion to criticize the American Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), about which Mitterrand had also expressed misgivings, and press for conventional and nuclear disarmament, including a 50 percent reduction in long-range nuclear armaments.

During the period of "cohabitation" in France, from 1986 to 1988, Mitterrand was further inclined in the direction of Franco-Soviet detente, and more responsive to Gorbachev's calls for arms control. More bilateral summits followed, and in December 1987, Mitterrand gave an interview in which he echoed exactly what de Gaulle had said some sixty years earlier. "I have never regarded the Soviet Union as an enemy, or even as an adversary. It is simply a large country with its own interests. We have ours too." <sup>7</sup>

The Franco-Soviet economic relationship, one of the great areas of optimism in the Gaullist years and immediately thereafter, has brought neither side the anticipated benefits. Although France continued to pursue its economic links with the Soviet Union even during the chilliest political period, and refused to impose any sanctions in response either to Afghanistan or Polish martial law, Franco-Soviet trade has been beset by problems that have persisted during Mitterrand's presidency. France has a growing trade deficit with the USSR and, despite discussions at every summit on how to remedy this, the Soviets have been unwilling to purchase more French goods. Moreover, in his drive to attract more Western capital and goods, Gorbachev has focused on West Germany--the USSR's largest capitalist trading partner--rather than France.

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<sup>7</sup>Interview in *Izvestiia*, December 3, 1987.

Although the Kremlin has watched Mitterrand's changing attitude toward Moscow with relief, there have been other areas of Mitterrand's policies that it has criticized. The USSR has been perturbed by the former enfant terrible of the Atlantic Alliance drawing closer to the United States and to NATO, and by Mitterrand's enthusiastic support of President Reagan's hard line on East-West military issues during the first Reagan administration. Moreover, it remained concerned about the decidedly mixed French reaction to the INF treaty, even though Mitterrand himself supported it and even though it represented a major Soviet concession on the exclusion of the French nuclear weapons in the agreement. Mitterrand also supported the idea of a common European defense, which the Soviets have criticized. But their greatest concern was his support for increased Franco-German military cooperation. Not only did Moscow fear the specter of a strong European defense; it was also concerned that growing Franco-German military cooperation might hasten the departure of American troops from Europe. And, however much the Soviets favor a weakened NATO, they prefer some American presence in Western Europe to none at all, especially if the alternative is a powerful Franco-German military alliance. As a recent article by three foreign ministry officials put it :

Nobody can reasonably object to stronger good-neighbor relations between the two countries, particularly in view of their poor record in mutual relations. But what is one to make of the fact that France and the FRG are increasingly "militarizing" their cooperation ? What or whom are these efforts directed against? -- Since many doors between the two halves of Europe have turned out to be locked, on the most part for no obvious reasons, the task is to unlock them and not add new locks --<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, Mitterrand's military policy, both in its conventional and nuclear aspects, has created new challenges to Soviet interests in Europe. The Defense Ministry, in explaining France's new nuclear modernization program , for the first time singled out the Soviet Union as the primary threat to French security. France's creation of a tactical nuclear force aimed at attacking military targets in Eastern Europe ,part of changing French military doctrine that

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<sup>8</sup>Nikolai Afanasyevsky, Eduard Taraskevich, Andrei Shvedov, "Between Yesterday and Today", *International Affairs*, no. 6, 1988, p. 30.

extends its vital interests beyond the strict confines of its borders, and its more general modernization program directly contradict Soviet interest in a militarily weak Western Europe. Of course, the USSR has overwhelming military preponderance over France. But the direction of Mitterrand's policies go against Gorbachev's drive for a less nuclear, if not totally denuclearized, Europe.

Under Mitterrand, French society has proved more impervious to Soviet appeals than in the past. The PCF has become increasingly marginal in French political life, and is conflict-ridden. Moreover, many of its rank-and-file members, as well as the leadership, are considerably less enamored of *glasnost* than are people within the USSR itself. From the Soviet point of view, the participation of the PCF in government did little to promote the fortunes of communism in Europe, and Soviet commentators are reserved or even openly critical of the PCF's role inside and outside of government.

As for the French population, it was initially far more resistant to Gorbachev's charms than were, say, the West Germans and most other Europeans. This has begun to change in the past year, but France remains the least pro-Gorbachev country in Europe. Forty-three percent of the population believe that Gorbachev's will to change the system is genuine --the figure for Europe as a whole is 66--and 38 percent believe that the United States is more peace-loving than the USSR. The figure is 22 percent for Germany.<sup>9</sup> Clearly, the belated discovery of the horrors of Stalinism has left a legacy of skepticism about the USSR's capacity for change that is greater than in most other European countries.

#### **FRANCE, THE SOVIET UNION AND THE FUTURE.**

Despite the fluctuations in Franco-Soviet ties and the Kremlin's disappointment with Mitterrand, at least in his first few years, de Gaulle's legacy has had a lasting effect on ties

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<sup>9</sup>Cited in Hassner, "France and the Soviet Union", p.47.

between Paris and Moscow. France and the Soviet Union created an elaborate institutional framework for mutual cooperation that is more extensive than that for any other Soviet relationship with a Western country. Even during the worst political times, these institutions continue to function, making it unlikely that there could ever be a major hiatus in relations similar to that between the Soviet Union and West Germany between 1983 and 1987. The Soviet Union's ties with France have a certain level of stability, whatever the political climate.

France remains a major object of Soviet interest because of its leading role in Europe, its close ties to West Germany, its nuclear deterrent, and its continuing disagreements with the United States over issues other than East-West ties. Of course, France was more useful when it disagreed with the United States and other Western countries over East-West ties, but only when these arguments made France more amenable than other Western countries to Soviet interests. For Gorbachev, France will remain an important partner and a potential alternative to Germany in the ranking of European interlocutors; but the French government and population remain more resistant to his plans for East-West European interdependence than those of other countries in the region.

The Soviet Union has also lost some of its utility for France. De Gaulle used detente with the USSR as part of his grand design for independence from the United States and a major world role for France. Gaullist France was a revisionist power, seeking to change the nature of East-West relations. Today, France is a status-quo power, more realistic about the limits to its policy of grandeur, even though it continues to play an active world role.<sup>10</sup> Since de Gaulle effected the most important change in postwar policy--France's withdrawal from NATO's integrated military command--there is no need to defy the United States directly, and, indeed, France has moved closer to NATO in the last decade. It can achieve its objectives by playing a more important role within Europe; but a close relationship with the Soviet Union by

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<sup>10</sup>Dominique Moisi, "French Foreign Policy: The Challenge of Adaptation", *Foreign Affairs*, Fall, 1988, pp 151-164.

itself will not suffice to make it a world power. Mitterrand, like his predecessors, realizes that he must pursue an active dialogue with the Soviet Union to prevent West Germany preempting the role of Moscow's only significant European partner. So, both sides continue to use each other for broader geopolitical purposes.

Ultimately, France's importance for the Soviet Union may depend on the way in which it pursues the Gaullist dream of overcoming Yalta. And there is a certain irony to the reversal of positions under Gorbachev. Prior to the mid-1980's, France's commitment to transcend Europe's geographical and ideological divide was viewed with suspicion and distaste in the Kremlin. Today, Gorbachev himself talks about Europe "from the Atlantic to the Urals", and about overcoming the division of "Europe, our common house". His vision of what this might entail is surely different from that of Mitterrand; but it is probably closer to that of Paris than that of Bonn, given the French and Soviet unease over German national aspirations. Nevertheless, the overcoming of Yalta is, of course, a long-term proposition. For the present, Franco-Soviet political relations are likely to remain cordial and even to improve, although France will remain more skeptical of arms control than the Soviet Union would like. Any further change in the relationship will depend on whether Gorbachev is able to implement his ambitious programs domestically. After all, so far he has been more successful in the West than at home; but ultimately his ability to remain in power will depend on the efficacy of domestic reforms, rather than on any innovative foreign policy moves.