



CSIS AFRICA NOTES

A publication of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C.

The 1990 Franco-African Summit

by J. Coleman Kitchen and Jean-Paul Paddock

The sixteenth Franco-African summit, held June 19-21 at the French coastal resort of La Baule, was attended by 35 African delegations, 22 led by heads of state (see "Attendance at the La Baule Summit," page 3). The informal agenda, "Debt and Political Evolution in Africa," adroitly acknowledged that the meeting was taking place amid a wave of "democratization" unrest directed at many of the participating governments, and provided the French hosts with an opening to bring to the fore new links between aid and the quality of governance.

Participants and Absentees

The first postcolonial Franco-African summit, which took place in Paris in 1973, involved presidents or senior ministers from 10 francophone countries. In the course of the ensuing 17 years, the roster of states at the summits has gradually expanded to include a range of lusophone and anglophone nations. (See "The Enduring French Connection" by J. Coleman Kitchen, *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 68, January 1987.) Among the nonfrancophone heads of state attending for the first time were Mozambique's President Joaquim Chissano and Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni (whose participation was part of his subsequently successful campaign to be elected the 1990-1991 chairman of the Organization of African Unity).

Noticeably absent were Côte d'Ivoire's President Félix Houphouët-Boigny and Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko, two regular participants at earlier gatherings. This was the second straight no-show for the octogenarian Houphouët-Boigny, who was unable to attend the last summit because of illness, but is believed to have stayed away this time because of domestic political unrest. The absence of Mobutu (who hosted the 1982 summit in Kinshasa), officially attributed to a "particularly heavy schedule," was unofficially ascribed to a crisis involving students and government forces in Lubumbashi.

Among the other absentees were Somalia's President Mohamed Siad Barre and Liberia's President Samuel Doe, both entangled in bloody civil wars; Mauritania's President Maawiya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, who wished, some say, to avoid meeting Senegal's President Abdou Diouf because of continuing tension between the two countries (see "OAU Assembly XXV" by J. Coleman Kitchen, *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 101, August 1989); and Nigeria, which sent an ambassadorial-level delegation to the 1988 Franco-African summit and was reportedly disinclined to respond to pressure to raise the status of its 1990



CENTER FOR STRATEGIC &
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

presence to ministerial level. Francophone Madagascar and francophone/anglophone Cameroon have yet to attend a Franco-African summit.

"We Must Speak of Democracy"

In the months leading up to the summit, the French media was swept by a wave of "Afropessimism." *Le Monde* led the way with an eight-part series on the "plagues of Africa" (May 29-June 9), followed by cover articles in several prominent magazines, including *Le Point* ("Black Africa: Bankruptcy," June 4-10), *L'Express* ("France—the African Trap," June 8), and a special issue of *Jeune Afrique* ("What Does France Want in Africa?," June 11).

Talk of a substantial change in French policy spread quickly when reports leaked out concerning a study drawn up for Prime Minister Michel Rocard by former diplomat Stéphane Hessel calling for a revision in foreign aid policy, with a greater emphasis on human rights and a greater proportion of aid to the Third World in general as opposed to francophone Africa. The study had not been officially released as of the La Baule summit, and there was speculation that it may have been shelved because of the apprehension it generated among Franc Zone leaders.

In his opening address, President François Mitterrand placed on the table a topic heretofore almost taboo: "Of course we must speak of democracy. . . . You should not consider freedom to be a hidden enemy. It will be, believe me, your best friend." While acknowledging the difficulty of building democracy in destitute countries, he repeatedly indicated at La Baule that "France will link its entire contribution effort to efforts made to move in the direction of greater freedom. . . . Aid will be more lukewarm toward regimes which conduct themselves in an authoritarian manner without accepting evolution toward democracy; it will be enthusiastic for those which take the step with courage."

Mitterrand did not go so far as to impose rigid constitutional-model aid preconditions on his African guests ("one must not forget the differences of structures, civilizations, traditions, and customs. . . . [i]t is impossible to propose a preformulated system"), but he did offer his "outline of a dream" of democracy in Africa, "[which] is the only means of achieving a state of equilibrium," with free elections, no censorship, a multiparty system, and independent judiciaries.

Although enthusiasm for the democratization theme was expressed by some leaders (notably Benin's President Mathieu Kerekou and Senegal's Diouf), a number of African participants were clearly uncomfortable about the implications for the longevity of their regimes of France's new focus on free elections.

By and large, however, the democracy formula was accepted in principle, as it was in the declaration issued in Addis Ababa on July 11 at the conclusion of the twenty-sixth OAU summit. It is noteworthy that the OAU declaration included a reservation that countries had the right to "determine, in all sovereignty, their system of democracy on the basis of their sociocultural values, taking into account the realities of each [country]." And

Le Monde (June 22) quoted one unidentified "African minister" present at La Baule as saying: "If it is necessary to move toward greater liberty in order to get aid, promising to do so commits one to nothing."

The summit's final declaration emphasized "the need to associate the relevant population more closely with the construction of their political, social, and economic future," but balanced this call with a statement "[deplored] the fact that the image of Africa is sometimes like a caricature and that this negative presentation of the continent contributes to the difficulties that it is attempting to overcome."

The Debt Issue

For a number of years, President Mitterrand has been speaking out in international forums on behalf of debt relief for Africa. At La Baule, following up on a May 1989 undertaking to cancel the development assistance debt to Paris of 35 low-income countries, he announced France's "unilateral decision" on two new debt-relief measures expected to cost France 1.45 billion francs in lost earnings over the next 15 years: (1) "to award only grants. . . in the future to the least developed countries," rather than continuing to offer some aid in the form of loans that would add to these countries' already burdensome debt load; (2) to "limit interest rates to 5 [rather than 10] percent on all public loans to the so-called medium-income countries of sub-Saharan Africa." The latter move affects Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Congo, and Gabon and applies to all loans to these countries by the French Caisse Centrale de Coopération Économique. The interest reduction will lower the four beneficiaries' debt-service costs by about 250 million francs in 1990.

At La Baule, Mitterrand also promised to continue pressing for further debt concessions for African countries,

CSIS AFRICA NOTES is a briefing paper series designed to serve the special needs of decision makers and analysts with Africa-related responsibilities in governments, corporations, the media, research institutions, universities, and other arenas. It is a publication of the African Studies Program of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C. CSIS is a private, nonpartisan, nonprofit policy research institute founded in 1962.

EDITOR: Director of African Studies Helen Kitchen.

SUBSCRIPTION RATE *CSIS Africa Notes* is sent airmail/first class to subscribers worldwide. The annual subscription price for 13 issues and occasional supplements is \$48.00. Please make checks payable to: *CSIS Africa Notes*, Suite 400, 1800 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006, U.S.A. Telephone: (202) 887-0219. Telex: 7108229583. Cables: CENSTRAT. FAX: (202) 775-3199.

ISSN 0736-9506

Previous Franco-African Summits

From 1973 until 1988, the Franco-African summits were held annually, with the venue alternating between France and Africa. Around 1988, however, it was decided that the Franco-African summit would take place every other year, with a "francophone summit" (bringing together countries worldwide in which French is a major language) in intervening years. The following list provides the year, venue, and principal issues discussed at previous summits:

- 1973** (Paris) Problems of the Franc Zone. Relations between Europe and Africa.
- 1974** No summit because of the death of French President Georges Pompidou.
- 1975** (Bangui, Central African Republic) Africa's economic problems.
- 1976** (Paris) Africa's economic problems.
- 1977** (Dakar, Senegal) Security problems of African countries.
- 1978** (Paris) Destabilization in Africa (especially the 1977-1978 cross-border incursions by exiled dissidents into Zaire's Shaba region).
- 1979** (Kigali, Rwanda) President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's proposal for a "trialogue" of European, Arab, and African countries.
- 1980** (Nice, France) Senegalese President Léopold Sédar Senghor's call for creation of an "organic francophone community."
- 1981** (Paris) Libya's intervention in Chad.
- 1982** (Kinshasa, Zaire) President Mitterrand's plea for a North-South dialogue.
- 1983** (Vittel, France) Chad.
- 1984** (Bujumbura, Burundi) Chad. Africa's economic problems.
- 1985** (Paris) Chad. Africa's foreign debt problem. South Africa/apartheid.
- 1986** (Lomé, Togo) Chad. Africa's economic problems.
- 1987** (Antibes, France) Chad. Africa's foreign debt problem.
- 1988** (Casablanca, Morocco) Impact of East-West détente on Africa. Africa's foreign debt problem. Chad.

Attendance at the La Baule Summit

Delegations Led by Heads of State

Benin	Gambia
Burkina Faso	Guinea-Bissau
Burundi	Mali
Cape Verde	Morocco
Central African Republic	Mozambique
Chad	Niger
The Comoros	Rwanda
Congo	São Tomé and Príncipe
Djibouti	Senegal
Equatorial Guinea	Togo
Gabon	Uganda

Delegations Led by Heads of Government

Tunisia
Zaire

Ministerial-Level Delegations

Angola	Namibia
Côte d'Ivoire	Seychelles
Egypt	Sierra Leone
Guinea	Somalia
Mauritania	Sudan
Mauritius	

Military Links

As of 1990, France has the largest "permanent" military presence (over 8,000 personnel) in sub-Saharan Africa of any foreign power. Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon, Senegal, and Togo have defense agreements with Paris that could be invoked in cases of external—but not necessarily internal—threat. Current agreements with Chad involve temporary French military deployment. (The military relationship with Chad has involved many ins and outs since the initial postcolonial defense agreement in 1960. For background, see "Why Chad?" by Alex Rondos and "Chad's Political History in Brief" by Rondos and J. Coleman Kitchen in *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 18, August 1983; and "Chad's Third Republic: Strengths, Problems, and Prospects" by William J. Foltz, *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 77, October 1987.) Twenty-three states, including those listed above, have technical military assistance agreements with France.

French forces are stationed in six countries: Djibouti (3,600 to 5,000), Chad (800), Central African Republic (1,200), Senegal (1,150), Gabon (500), and Côte d'Ivoire (900). Backing this presence are specialized units of the Force d'Action Rapide, a rapid-deployment force of some 46,000 headquartered outside Paris at Maison-Lafitte. Approximately 21,000 of these troops are available for rapid deployment to sub-Saharan Africa (the 11th

arguing: "Aid to the Third World cannot rely only on the French contribution. France alone is not in a position to stop the current decline. What is needed is a worldwide effort." Within weeks after the Franco-African meeting, he raised the problem of Africa's crisis at a European Community summit in Dublin, and in July at the economic summit of the "Group of Seven" (G-7) major industrial powers in Houston, Texas.

Although his efforts have thus far produced no major initiatives by other nations, Mitterrand's lobbying may gain France a place in African history as one of the principal architects behind efforts to mobilize the West to act decisively on the continent's debt crisis.

The CFA Franc Zone

The Franc Zone consists of France and 14 African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo) whose currencies are convertible to the French franc. In all of the African member states except the Comoros, the currency is called the CFA franc. ("CFA" stands for Communauté Financière Africaine in West Africa and for Coopération Financière en Afrique centrale in Central Africa.) Since 1948, the conversion rate has been 50 CFA francs per French franc. The same rate applies to the Comoros franc. Some key features and implications of the Franc Zone system:

- **Two central banks:** Two regional central banks, the Banque Centrale des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (BCEAO) and the Banque des États de l'Afrique Centrale (BEAC), issue CFA francs for each member country.
- **Credit mechanism:** The regional central banks deposit 65 percent of their net external reserves in "operations accounts" at the French treasury in Paris. The banks have generous credit arrangements with the French treasury.
- **Policy coordination:** Monetary and credit policy is uniform throughout the Franc Zone. The central banks meet annually with national committees to allocate credit to countries and domestic banks. As an anti-inflation safeguard, credit offered by the central banks to individual governments is limited to 20 percent of that government's past-year fiscal receipts.
- **The hard-currency edge:** A person or institution holding CFA francs can exchange them for French francs at any time and place. This has historically given Franc Zone countries an advantage in international trade.

Devaluation Ahead?

For several decades, the system served its members well. The economies of Franc Zone countries tended to grow faster than the sub-Saharan average, and inflation was relatively low. Beginning in the mid-1980s, however, the arrangement has experienced significant stresses:

- A number of countries outside of the Franc Zone system (e.g., Ghana and Nigeria) devalued their currencies. This development, combined with the rise in the French franc relative to the dollar since 1985, has threatened francophone countries' overseas export market share. It has also spurred smuggling into the Franc Zone, with resultant losses due to unpaid tariffs and reduced demand for domestically produced goods.

- A decline in the international prices of a number of key export commodities has hurt the Franc Zone economies.

- The BCEAO zone has run a deficit in its operational account throughout the 1980s; the BEAC zone experienced a deficit for the first time in 1987. In 1988, the Franc Zone had a net deficit of \$2.3 billion with the French treasury.

Some analysts believe that the CFA franc is now significantly overvalued. In addition, inflation may surge in Franc Zone countries if governments accede to popular demands for increased wages and public services. Such a development, it is argued, would only add to the exchange-rate imbalance and increase the pressure for a revision in the rate of exchange. *The Economist* (London, July 21) takes the position that "[i]t is no longer a matter of whether the CFA franc will be devalued, but of when and how."

Thus far, however, both France and its African partners have rejected (at least for public consumption) the idea of devaluation. President Mitterrand reaffirmed this stand at the La Baule summit, saying that he was "hostile" to devaluation, which "would not settle any difficulties." A recent study by the London-based Overseas Development Institute concludes that, given the differing inflation situations in the various countries, a sensible solution would be devaluations by different percentages in the Franc Zone nations, with continuing currency convertibility among these states and with France. A possible variant suggested would be an eventual replacement of the present connection to the French franc by an adjustable link to the European Currency Unit (ecu), the European Community's unit of account, especially if the ecu evolves into a pan-European currency.

Parachute Division and the 9th Marine Infantry Division).

Although Mitterrand regards this military capability primarily as a diplomatic tool, he has presidential authority to commit French troops to African missions without prior knowledge or consent of parliament. (For a detailed historical account of "French Military Power and Black Africa Since 1960," see chapter 5 of *French Power in Africa* by John Chipman [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989].)

Despite France's record over the years of selectively intervening in internal conflicts (e.g., in Gabon in 1964, Chad in 1968, the Central African Republic in 1979, and the Comoros in 1989), francophone African leaders were becoming increasingly doubtful in early 1990 about the size and role of the French military presence in the coming decade. When dissident Ivorian air force conscripts temporarily seized Abidjan's international airport on May 16, for example, Paris declined to intervene militarily in response to a personal appeal to Mitterrand by President Houphouët-Boigny on the grounds that the 1961 defense agreement with Côte d'Ivoire did not apply to internal crises. Mitterrand reportedly told the Ivorian leader that "interference in a former colony belonged to another age." (*The Guardian* [UK], May 18.)

At La Baule, President Mitterrand underscored this point by reaffirming that France remains prepared to intervene militarily against external threats to African nations with which it has defense agreements but also emphasizing that "our role is not to intervene in internal conflicts," except to protect French citizens. Among the prominent French policymakers who have begun to question a high-profile military role in the former colonies is Minister of Defense Jean-Pierre Chevènement, who was quoted in *Le Point* (June 4-10) as saying: "The goal of the [defense] agreements was no doubt to help the African countries in their first steps. But since then, time has passed." Pierre Messmer, who served as prime minister under President Georges Pompidou, was cited elsewhere in the same issue as arguing that "France is under no obligation to help a government that is no longer supported by its people. Only circumstances justify an intervention, or nonintervention."

Any deep cutback in the French military presence would have economic as well as political and military implications for the countries involved, because significant income is derived from the stationing of French military personnel.

What Lies Ahead?

The message communicated at La Baule seems to be that multiparty democratization has become a de facto condition for generous French aid. This new "democratization" theme coincides with the emphasis on "governance" and "accountability" recently added to the structural-adjustment medicine being prescribed by the major multilateral financial institutions. (See "The World Bank's Africa Update: Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue" by Carol

Lancaster, *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 108, February 1990.)

More specifically, the Mitterrand government has indicated that it is far less inclined than in the past to overlook major manifestations of contempt for human dignity by African regimes or to accept with equanimity the amassing of personal fortunes by leaders of impoverished countries. Interest (and assistance) seem likely to be increasingly focused on what *Le Monde* has termed the "third generation of leaders"—middle-aged, well-educated, technically competent, experienced, and pragmatically oriented technocrats.

There is, however, uncertainty in Paris regarding how and at what pace "Paristroika" should be implemented. Some French observers, noting that democratization would increase the ability of opposition groups to press for immediate improvements in living standards even if such steps were not yet economically sustainable, are skeptical about pressing too hard for rapid political reform; their

J. Coleman Kitchen, Fellow in African Studies at CSIS, is the African Studies Program's research coordinator and text editor. He received his undergraduate degree from St. John's College (Annapolis), and his Ph.D. in mathematical sciences from Johns Hopkins University. His many contributions to *CSIS Africa Notes* include "The Enduring French Connection," no. 68, January 1987; "OAU Assembly XXV," no. 101, August 1989; "OAU Assembly XXII," no. 61, August 1986; "Chad's Political History in Brief," no. 18, August 1983; "Zaire and Israel," no. 10, March 1983; and "Where Does the OAU Go From Here?," no. 3, September 1982.

Jean-Paul Paddock, a dual citizen of France and the United States, is a research assistant at U.S.-CREST (Center for Research and Evaluation of Strategy and Technology), a Washington-area think tank, and served until recently as a consultant to the World Bank's Latin America and Caribbean Department. While completing his graduate studies at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (where he received his M.A. in international economics and African studies), he served on the research staff of the CSIS African Studies Program for two years and for several months in 1989 as an intern at the U.S. embassy in Dakar, Senegal. Later this year he will be joining the Agency for International Development's Africa Bureau as a Presidential Management Intern (PMI). He researched and coordinated a special issue of *CSIS Africa Notes*—"Who's Who, and Where: A Guide to Key Personnel in U.S.-African Diplomacy," no. 82, February 1988.

watchword is "evolution without destabilization."

Another uncertainty concerns the extent to which guidance of Africa policy should be centered, as it has been for decades, under the near-exclusive control of the Élysée (the presidential residence). With the focus of the Élysée becoming increasingly Eurocentric, will (and should) the cooperation and foreign affairs ministries be accorded more authority in decision making on relations with Africa?

A third question arises from the fact that France's once-aggressive commercial penetration of the continent has turned hesitant for the time being. Whereas French private investment in sub-Saharan Africa amounted to \$1 billion a year in 1981-1983, in 1988 there was a net capital outflow of over \$800 million. (See "The CFA Franc Zone," page 4.)

On balance, despite these signals of ongoing reassessment, France's special relationship with its former colonies seems likely to be maintained and new links cultivated. For example, French-Nigerian trade has risen sharply in the past decade, and France is cautiously hopeful that Nigeria will be a stimulus for growth in West Africa, as well as the linchpin of efforts to integrate West Africa's markets via the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In his remarks at La Baule, Mitterrand encouraged African nations to develop regional common markets: "Shouldn't you be seeking to unify your markets? Shouldn't you be seeking to harmonize your tax, legal, and customs rules?"

The next Franco-African "family reunion," originally expected to be held in Zaire, is tentatively scheduled to take place in Libreville, Gabon, in 1992.