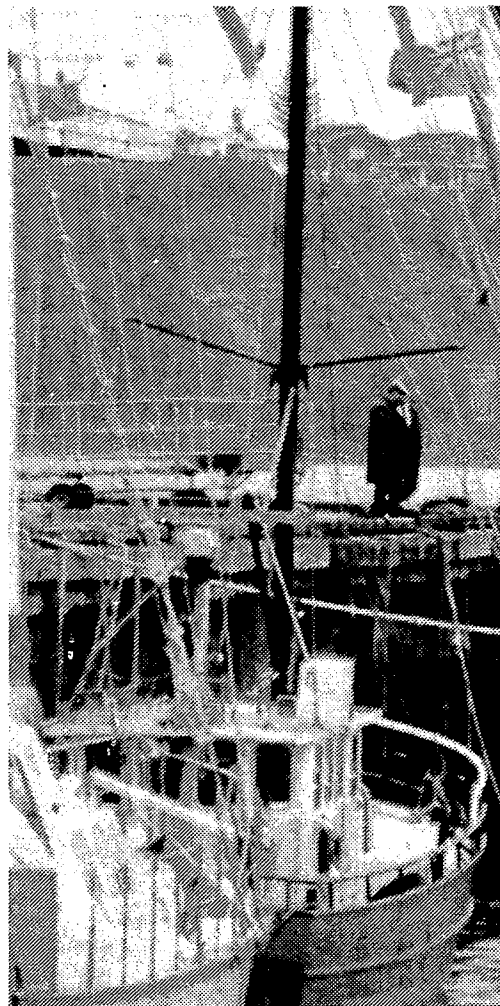


The Greenpeace Affair



On July 10, 1985 two bombs exploded under the hull of the *Rainbow Warrior* anchored in the harbour of Auckland, New Zealand, killing a photographer of Portuguese origin, Fernando Pereira.

The *Rainbow Warrior* was the flagship of a "fleet" belonging to the international organisation Greenpeace—a group of pacifists and ecologists based mainly in the imperialist countries who for fifteen years have been protesting, often at considerable danger, the testing and deployment of nuclear weapons as well as taking up other causes of a more specifically environmental nature, such as the fight to save the whale population from extinction.

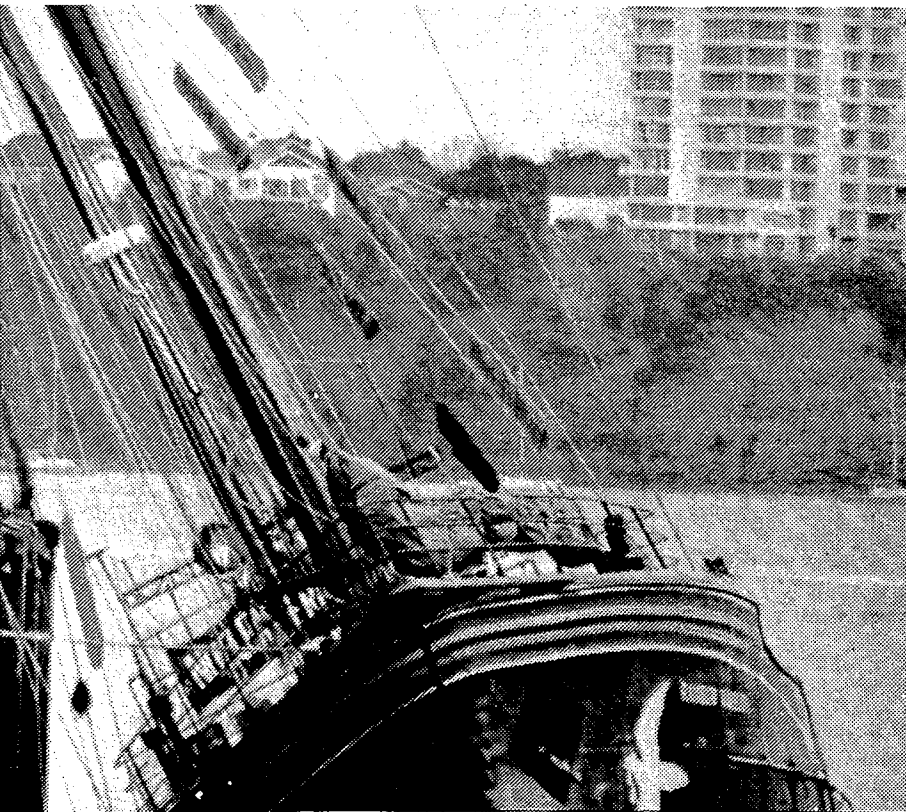
Because of these activities, Greenpeace had earned the animosity of the nuclear powers. In

the wake of the murderous assault in the Auckland harbour, therefore, it was not immediately evident which hand was behind the explosions. The U.S., certainly, was a likely culprit as was Great Britain, which is Greenpeace's official homebase, and where it is considered an embarrassment by the Thatcher government. Even the Soviet Union, despite its efforts to use some of Greenpeace's campaigns for propaganda purposes, has had some serious conflicts with the organisation in the past: in 1982 a flotilla had sailed into a Soviet testing zone in the Kamchatka area—near the same area where the Soviets shot down the Korean 007 airplane.

But it was particularly France which was suspect. Ever since 1965, France has been using the island of

Mururoa in the French Pacific region of Polynesia to test and perfect its nuclear weapons. Until 1975 France continued to conduct atmospheric testing. Since that time scores of underground tests have taken place, each one weakening further the volcanic bedrock of the island and threatening to send the whole island and the accumulated pollution drifting off into the Pacific.

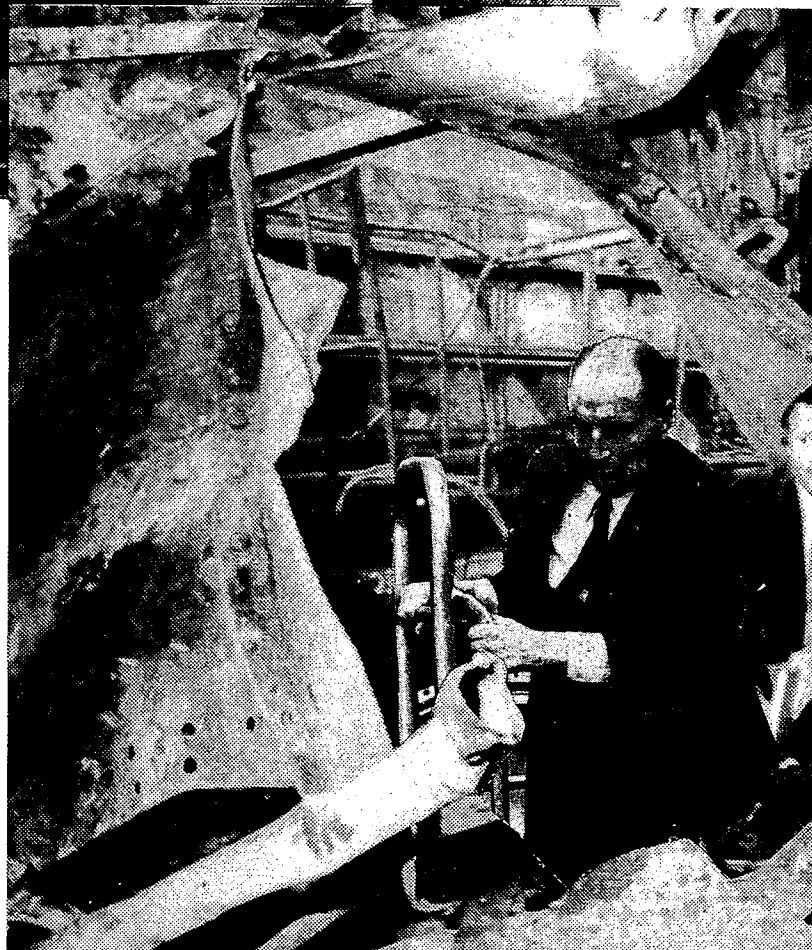
For these reasons Greenpeace has continually struggled against the French nuclear testing at Mururoa, provoking brutal reaction by French authorities. In one incident in the early 1970s, French sailors boarded a Greenpeace vessel and viciously beat its unarmed crew, including the current head of Greenpeace, David McTaggart, who



lost an eye during that confrontation.

At the time of the sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior*, Greenpeace was preparing another campaign against French nuclear testing at Mururoa. Officials in Paris were particularly concerned about thwarting this campaign and, at the same time, loudly proclaiming and trumpeting the French presence in the Pacific, which had come under increasing attack from the independence movement in New Caledonia as well as from imperialist Australia and New Zealand.

It is not surprising that suspicion centred on France, and all the more so when, two days after the explosion, New Zealand police arrested a "couple" with false Swiss passports who were soon revealed to be agents of the French secret services



(D.G.S.E.). Quickly, the government of New Zealand itself, headed by the social-democratic blowhard David Lange, was to accuse France. Yet, in spite of all this, and even as evidence mounted daily, the French government continued to issue denial after denial of any official role in the attack on the *Rainbow Warrior* and to piously promise to cooperate in the investigation of the crime along with the eventual "punishment" of any unknown Frenchmen who might just happen to be involved (as individuals, of course!).

It was the beginning of a *scandale* on a scale not before seen during the Mitterrand regime in France. In many ways it was comparable to the "Watergate" affair in the United States and had many of the same features: criminal acts committed by the government itself; clumsy lying by officials on all levels trying to cover-up the affair; "leaks" to the press by various functionaries each out to save their own careers at the expense of their colleagues; efforts by rival factions of the ruling class to utilise *l'affaire Greenpeace* to carry out their political interests; an accelerating cycle of charges and counter-charges and lies and counter-lies that flew out of control; the increasing exposure of the hallowed government officials as narrow, self-seeking liars and criminals.

What made Greenpeace different from Watergate was above all its *origin* (which, as we will see, is the one thing that all "responsible" parties in France, right and left, try to obliterate). Whereas the Watergate scandal in the U.S. began as simply a case of inner bourgeois foul play (sending agents to break into the offices of the rival Democratic Party headquarters) the Greenpeace affair was set off by the murder of a man during a terrorist attack against a pacifist organisation—conducted in the interests of still greater crimes: the strengthening of the grip of French imperialism on a major portion of the Pacific and the preparation for nuclear warfare.

France in the Pacific

Although the "traditional sphere of influence" of French imperialism is located in Africa and the Mid-East,

at the height of its power French imperialism was able to extend its influence and contend with its rivals throughout the globe. Even today remnants of the French colonial empire still exist where old-fashioned, open colonialism is still the order of the day. This is particularly true in a number of "island colonies" which France maintains scattered about the oceans of the world: La Reunion in the Indian Ocean, Guadeloupe and Martinique in the Caribbean, and, above all, New Caledonia and French Polynesia in the Pacific.

French possessions in the South Pacific total 22,700 square kilometres distributed over 130 islands. The largest of these possessions, New Caledonia, has a population of 140,000 while 170,000 others are inhabitants of French Polynesia. One factor which makes these possessions particularly valuable is the current international agreement which grants each state exclusive economic rights over the ocean floor within 200 kilometres of its shores. 200 kilometres around every French island in the Pacific amounts to an economic zone *fourteen times the surface of France*.

It is not only immediate economic interest that encourages France to fight so bitterly to maintain its foothold in the Pacific. The French imperialists are also very aware, and concerned, about long-term, strategic interests in the region as well. One leading political figure in France stated that the Pacific will play the same role in the 21st century that the Mediterranean played in antiquity and the Atlantic has played in the past three hundred years. And the spokesmen for all political tendencies in France have made very, very clear that France intends to be at the table, if not at the head of it, when the Pacific spoils are to be divided up.

All this is quite linked to France's nuclear policy. After all, protecting and expanding an imperialist empire in today's world is above all a question of nuclear weapons. And the French bourgeoisie, as well as its various political parties, open and disguised, understands this only too well.

So what other single gesture could so

well typify the reality of French imperialism and its ambitions as the explosion of nuclear weapons in their far off Pacific atoll. Far beyond the immediate military benefits of these tests (and it has been asked, not without reason, that if they are as harmless as the French say, why couldn't they be conducted in the metropole) is the clear political statement involved. As government officials openly proclaim, French "dissuasion" requires the adversary to be convinced that France will *use* its nuclear weapons if necessary and thus a cornerstone of French policy in all its aspects is to constantly perfect, test and prepare to use its nuclear weapons. The brutal destruction of a pacifist ship is itself a clear message of French imperialism's intention to go to whatever lengths necessary to protect and expand its empire as well as a reflection of the intensification of the contradictions pushing France and the other imperialist powers to prepare ever more energetically for world war.

All of this is reflected in the internal politics of France as well, and especially the role of the President of France who is, above all, the guardian and ultimate trigger of France's nuclear force, the third largest in the world. This role was carved out by DeGaulle, for whom the *force de frappe* was the vital element in restoring France's "rightful" participation in the world. This policy has continued under every successive French president including François Mitterrand, the great defender of human rights and socialist! In fact the basic requirement the bourgeoisie had made of the Socialist Party was that it abandon its anti-nuclear rhetoric that, as empty as it was, had marked an earlier period, and rally around the *force de frappe*. The reversal of the Socialist Party's official position on nuclear weapons was thus a key element in the election of Mitterrand as president.

Since assuming office Mitterrand has in no way betrayed this pledge. In fact, while his policies have, across the board, been marked by one right wing turn after another, there is no arena where his reactionary, imperialist nature is so clear

as in relation to nuclear affairs. He has ardently fought for the deployment of the U.S. missiles in Europe, vigorously stepped up France's research on the neutron bomb, and updated the nuclear submarine fleet. Mitterrand has gone so far as to state, in arrogance or unwitting buffoonery, "la dissuasion, c'est moi" (a reference to the famous statement of Louis XIV who said *l'état, c'est moi* or "I am the state.")

As stated before, imperialism is not a partisan affair. That is to say that in France the basic strategic orientation of the country is not subjected to the bickering of bourgeois political parties; on the contrary, the general outlines of French imperialist policy enjoy a very broad "consensus." Even the revisionist French Communist Party (PCF) has dropped its opposition to the *force de frappe*.

Thus it is against this backdrop that the Greenpeace scandal erupted. Bit by bit the extremely ironic situation developed in which a genuine crisis of the Mitterrand regime took shape alongside bitter infighting within the ranks of the ruling circles, while all the principals concerned were 100 percent united on the really essential: that France maintain its nuclear forces; that tests be carried out at Mururoa; that France remain a "Pacific power;" and that anyone be viciously suppressed who dared lay a finger on France's sovereignty (read, its ability to maintain its nukes and use them as it sees fit).

The Scandal Unfolds

Immediately after the arrest of the D.G.S.E. couple — the "Turenges"—Mr. Turenge (actually Alain Mafart) telephoned (from jail!) a special number belonging to the D.G.S.E. to alert Paris that the couple's getaway had been fouled up. Thus from the earliest hours, top officials were aware that French agents had been arrested in New Zealand and were under investigation for the attack against the *Rainbow Warrior*. The cover-up began right there.

At first, the French secret services tried to find another foreign power to take the fall for the *Rainbow Warrior*. Apparently they ap-

proached British intelligence, who seem to have been more or less aware of the movements of the "Turenges" and may have informed the New Zealand authorities in *advance* of the attack. The British refused. The Swiss let it be known they would not go along with any efforts to provide a Swiss "cover" for the arrested agents.

Meanwhile, French espionage circles were busy floating all sorts of "disinformation"—false leads to journalists aimed at spreading confusion about the origin of the affair. It was for example, reported to be a diabolical plot by "anglo-saxons" to commit an attack and then blame it on the French. This self-serving hypothesis was faithfully repeated by more than one "respectable" journal (of both the right and the left) and continued to surface in one form or another in the months to come. Efforts were made to imply that even if, perhaps, some French citizens were involved in the attack it must be the work of right wing fanatics and certainly not of the faithful followers of government orders. And on and on.

Meanwhile, the rumour mill was started up to discredit Greenpeace. Since the organisation enjoyed a high prestige in France as in many other countries it was necessary to spread all sorts of unsubstantiated lies about it. The *Rainbow Warrior* was equipped, it was claimed, with espionage equipment and its real aim was to monitor the French tests for the benefit of the Soviets. Efforts were made to portray the murdered photographer as some sort of a super spy.

These efforts continued even as new evidence pointed ever more clearly to the involvement of the French secret services. The true identity of the "Turenges" came out quickly, as did the mysterious existence of a yacht called the *Ouvéa*, home port Nouméa in New Caledonia, which just happened to be in New Zealand right before the attack. It turns out that the crew of the *Ouvéa* was made up mostly of naval combat frogmen based in Corsica who work directly under the authority of the French secret services....

It was also revealed that a certain

French agent, Captain Christine Cabon, had infiltrated the Greenpeace organisation in Auckland in April and May of 1985 as well as showing an inordinate interest in finding out where certain types of scuba diving equipment was available in New Zealand. The agent, under the alias of Frederique Bonlieu, was able to manufacture her entry into Greenpeace circles as the result of several "chance encounters" among ocean lovers and then acted out a "conversion" from luke-warm supporter of French nuclear policy to ardent pacifist which made her seem all the more convincing.

To top it all off the *Ouvéa*, a very expensive yacht, disappeared from the face of the earth. What happened to the *Ouvéa* is still not clear but press reports indicate that it was scuttled at sea and its crew picked up by a French submarine.

All of the above would be evidence enough to make any government blush, and by early August the Paris daily *Le Monde* was saying, more or less openly, that it was time to cut losses by firing and putting the blame on Defence Minister Charles Hernu. Laurent Fabius, Mitterrand's Prime Minister, was apparently of the same opinion.

Nevertheless, Mitterrand chose to try to ride out the storm. He had one piece of evidence still working for him: it seems that neither the "Turenges" nor the crew of the *Ouvéa* could have personally placed the bombs that sunk the *Rainbow Warrior*. Thus Mitterrand adopted a dual policy of increasing arrogance while hiring a long time Gaullist, Bernard Tricot, to write a report whitewashing the government.

The Tricot Report

The Tricot report was truly a world-class example of hypocrisy, lies and cynicism. His investigation apparently consisted of interviewing various key government officials and asking them "did you sink the *Rainbow Warrior*?" and then taking their denials as evidence of French innocence. The *Ouvéa's* mission for example, was simply to "practice navigation in the South Pacific (!)" and, secondarily of

course, to consider the possibility of joining a Greenpeace flotilla at a later date. The "Turenges" were there only on an innocent reconnaissance mission against forces who threatened French interests. Tricot even waxes eloquent in his report about the sailing ability of the crew of the *Ouvéa* and how this won them the respect of New Zealanders. He never asked how the yacht disappeared, nor did he interview the crew. Most interesting of all, he never explained why it was necessary to have *combat frogmen* on hand for a purely reconnaissance mission. He concludes his report on August 25, "All that I have heard and seen gives me the certitude that no decision was made on the government level to harm the *Rainbow Warrior*."

Tricot's report was greeted with astonishment and laughter by all quarters. It is difficult to imagine that it was ever meant to be believed. It seems that the Tricot report was aimed at going through the motions of an inquiry, and essentially let it be known that the whole affair was to be whitewashed under the cover of *raison d'état*.

Laurent Fabius' comments on 29 August regarding the Tricot report in the midst of the uproar that accompanied its publication are particularly interesting. While Fabius had to admit that "I have my doubts," his main point was to throw down a gauntlet: "As a nuclear power and Pacific power we have to defend what we consider to be the interests of France in the region. Yet there are activities that are contrary to our interests: no one, least of all those who encourage these activities (i.e. New Zealand), should be surprised that we are vigilant in the safeguarding of our interests."

In this same speech Fabius attacks Greenpeace as an organisation "trying to dictate defence policy to France" and finishes by challenging New Zealand to demonstrate the proof that the French agents blew up the boat. In other words, "catch us if you can." It is especially ironic that after all of his previous hot air, New Zealand Prime Minister Lange found Fabius' speech "much more honourable and much more con-

structive" than earlier French statements.

A careful reading of the Tricot report does, however, help to make clear why Mitterrand himself chose to adopt a position of "stonewalling," as Richard Nixon had put it during the Watergate crisis. It seems that the entire operation against the *Rainbow Warrior* was of such a magnitude (3 million French francs) that it required special budget allotments. Thus even if one would care to argue that the operation had never been cleared in advance with the highest state authorities it could not be executed without the direct approval of Mitterrand's personal staff, in the person of one General Saulnier, head of Mitterrand's military staff at the time, and now Chief of Staff of the French Armed Forces. It would be difficult for anyone to believe that the good general put his signature down without talking to his boss. From this flows Mitterrand's very personal interest to try to maintain, at whatever cost, the myth that the French operation against the *Rainbow Warrior*, combat frogmen, yachts and all, was a simple information-gathering mission. It turned out later that a key member of Fabius' personal staff was also required to initial the request for extra funds. Alas, the French love for paperwork comes back to haunt them...

Despite the universal disbelief in the Tricot Report the French government persevered with boldness. On 18 August Mitterrand had taken the highly unusual step of publicly ordering the armies to "forbid, by force if necessary, all unauthorized entry into French territorial waters and French airspace of the Polynesian islands of Mururoa and Fangataufa...I restate that the nuclear tests will continue in the Pacific as long as deemed necessary by the French authorities and these alone." In early September Mitterrand went one better by paying a surprise royal visit to...Mururoa for a personal inspection of the nuke-testing site (after first witnessing a rocket launching—alas, a failure—in the French South American colony of Guyana). Mitterrand convened all of France's

ambassadors, military commanders, and territorial administrators to join him in Mururoa for a meeting of what he dubbed the "Committee of the Pacific." When Prime Minister Lange felt compelled by the strong anti-nuclear sentiment in New Zealand to issue more of his empty protests, Mitterrand responded with a polite but firm kick in the teeth, "it would seem correct that the injuries and accusations of which France is the object be avoided." One can only wonder how Mitterrand would have reacted to a foreign power sinking a boat in the Seine!

The Dam Breaks

On 17 September the Greenpeace crisis reached new intensities. *Le Monde*, a "semi-official" newspaper if ever one existed, announced as fact what everyone had already known: French agents blew up the *Rainbow Warrior*. Furthermore *Le Monde* provided the key to understanding *how* the attack was committed: a *third* team of French agents (that is, neither the "Turenges" nor the crew of the *Ouvéa*) set the bomb and left town right away. Two days later *l'Express*, a newsweekly, confirmed the story and revealed the identities of the agents involved (both from the same training centre in Corsica for combat frogmen).

Mitterrand, who seems impervious to shame, reacted to the latest turn of events by issuing a public letter to Fabius asking him to cut off some heads and indicating that he only knows what he reads in the paper, just like anyone else in France. This public letter irritated Fabius who in turn leaked to the press that he already asked for permission to fire *Hernu four times* in the month of August and that it was Mitterrand who was reluctant to let his old pal and darling of the military establishment take the fall.

In any event, *Hernu* submitted a resignation which was accepted by a tearful Mitterrand ("I must express my pain, my regrets and my gratitude...You continue to command my esteem and the esteem of Frenchmen who recognise the fine servants of the country"). Admiral Lacoste was fired with less

ceremony. Paul Quillès was appointed the new Defence Minister only to discover upon taking office that the documents of the Greenpeace Affair were (surprise!) missing. Shortly thereafter, Fabius announced that his investigation had "revealed" that the decision to sink the *Rainbow Warrior* came from Charles Hernu and Admiral Lacoste. Several arrests of military officers were carried out, not for blowing up the *Rainbow Warrior* of course; the only persons jailed by the French government were imprisoned for leaking information to the press! Within days the Elysée officially declared the case closed and *Le Monde* obediently followed suit. *L'affaire Greenpeace* was relegated to tiny articles on the back pages of newspapers and public opinion polls announced that the "public" was "tired" of reading about the scandal.

One of the reasons for the very dramatic "loss of interest" was the almost universal desire to save Mitterrand; between Hernu and the President lay only one more potential sacrificial lamb (Laurent Fabius) and the latter had made it clear that if he went he would pull Mitterrand down with him. What was at stake was not Mitterrand the politician, but Mitterrand the President, holder of the key to France's missiles. As a notorious right-wing minister of the former Giscard regime put it, "the president, symbol of national unity, must be kept clear of the vicissitudes of government, except in the case of high treason." Saving Mitterrand also is part of preparing what has come to be known as "cohabitation," which refers to the likely situation which will exist after spring 1986 when new parliamentary elections will probably bring about a majority controlled by the Right, while Mitterrand will remain president for two more years. Most of the principal opposition leaders have spoken out in favour of "cohabitating" with Mitterrand.

As *Le Monde* was to put it in an editorial explaining the "differences" between Watergate and the Greenpeace affair: "there is no doubt that the method chosen to stop Greenpeace was both stupid and criminal. But it is not possible to

claim that the squad in Auckland served the personal interests of Monsieur Mitterrand." In other words, if Richard Nixon could be chased from office for using espionage tactics in the pursuit of his own reelection, Mitterrand must be protected since he acted on behalf of the most noble of interests, the *force de frappe*.

The Paralysis of the Masses

Throughout the entire affair one force was not heard from—the proletariat and revolutionary-minded and progressive people in France. In fact, there was not, to our knowledge, a *single demonstration* in France against the crime of blowing up the *Rainbow Warrior*.

There are, of course, various explanations for this deafening silence. A large part of the population continues to support the *force de frappe*: the relative independence of France's nuclear forces from the U.S. has to a large degree spared the French bourgeoisie from the mass refusal of nuclear weapons that has swept over other Western European countries in the last few years. In addition, some of the social forces who could be expected to react to such an outrage are among those who have been first deceived, then disarmed and finally demoralised by the Mitterrand phenomenon. There is certainly no question that Mitterrand has succeeded in riding through the storm in a way that an openly "right wing" president could not. The comments by the Minister of the Environment, Huguette Bourchardeau who, until recently, represented in the Mitterrand government a small petit bourgeois party characterised as "extreme left," the P.S.U. are one interesting weathervane. She declared that Hernu was "very courageous to accept the responsibility for actions which were linked to Defence" and that she was "quite proud to participate in a government that was so committed to shedding light on a scandal." It is interesting to note that her Ministry had given a subsidy of 30,000 francs to Greenpeace only a few months before the attack! The French bourgeoisie is certainly still carrying out tactics, and they have plenty of ex-"leftists" around to faithfully do

their bidding and excuse even the most barbaric of crimes.

The silence of the masses on the Greenpeace affair is probably best explained by the lack of a conscious revolutionary political force, a vanguard proletarian party, capable of really penetrating beneath the surface and challenging the terms on which the bourgeoisie had placed the debate. On the one hand everything was clear: the government had blown up the boat and every official involved, from the combat frogmen to Mitterrand himself, was implicated in the murder up to their elbows. Yet the bourgeoisie had succeeded in engineering the unfolding of the scandal in such a way that it remained on the ruling classes' terms: who ordered the attack? did the secret service agents fail on purpose to discredit the regime? what is the best way to thwart Greenpeace? etc., etc.

The Greenpeace scandal created an excellent opportunity for genuine revolutionary forces to expose the imperialist nature of France and its bloody crimes. But in the absence of such forces capable and willing to undertake such a responsibility the bourgeoisie was successful in ruling the most important political points "out of order:" that France was an imperialist power in the world, including the South Pacific; that the nuclear force existed to protect and ultimately expand that imperialism; that the self-appointed defenders of the rights of man would go to any lengths to crush their opponents, even relatively harmless ones, if they felt their fundamental interests at stake. On all these questions, unfortunately, the bourgeois consensus emerged *strengthened* in the course of the scandal. Not that more people have been won to these reactionary positions, but that these positions have gone unchallenged and have, through the working out of the Greenpeace scandal, become more than ever openly declared as the united will of the nation.

As if to announce the end of *l'affaire Greenpeace* Laurent Fabius led a delegation from various political parties to the island of Mururoa in late October to attend the underground testing of a nuclear bomb. □