

Publicação Herald TribuneDe 11/10/79 pag. 2

Data _____

News Analysis**Moscow, Marchais Thwart PLO in West**

By Ronald Koven

PARIS (WP)— Apparently at the behest of Moscow, the French Communist Party has created a major complication for the Palestine Liberation Organization's drive for respectability in the West.

The French Communists claimed in the newspaper l'Humanite last week that a party delegation that had just returned from Beirut had agreed with PLO leader Yasser Arafat on the time and place for a

meeting between him and French Communist leader Georges Marchais, presumably in France.

There was no immediate confirmation from the PLO, which has been insisting that Mr. Arafat wants to come to Paris only at the invitation of French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing.

For the PLO, France is the key to broader acceptance by the nine members of the European Economic Community. Mr. Arafat has been acting as if a good relationship with

Western Europe is the wedge he needs to force the United States to accord recognition of the PLO as a negotiating partner in a Middle East peace settlement.

But close observers of Middle East diplomacy say that the Russians have been showing increasing anxiety over Mr. Arafat's recent successes at making friends in the West. The Russians seem to fear, these observers say, that they will lose their hold over Mr. Arafat if he gains too many allies in the West. If Mr. Arafat could cloak himself in the mantle of France's prestige, few other European countries would be likely to resist him.

Visit to Turkey

The PLO leader visited Turkey last Friday at the invitation of Premier Bulent Ecevit. It was Mr. Arafat's first visit to a member of the Atlantic alliance. But he recently visited Spain and, during the summer, he met in Vienna with Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky and former West German Chancellor Willy Brandt.

So the French Communist move appears designed to undercut the effective pressure Mr. Arafat had been applying on Mr. Giscard d'Estaing to be received in Paris. The French Foreign Ministry spokesman predictably said that it would be "very maladroit of Mr. Arafat to think that he could use [the French Communist invitation] to be received by French leaders."

Nevertheless, the Marchais invitation contains the risk that Mr. Giscard d'Estaing would finally invite Mr. Arafat rather than let the Russians get away with saying that France is not as good a friend of the Arabs as it claims to be. One possibility discussed here is for Mr. Giscard d'Estaing to meet Mr. Arafat during a tour the French leader is to make of the Gulf countries early next year.

If that happens, the French Communists can be expected to say that such a meeting was thanks only to their pressure tactics.

In Tandem

Mr. Marchais has recently become increasingly active in the conduct of a foreign policy parallel to the French governmental one. This was the case in his recent visit to Algeria that duplicated one by French Foreign Minister Jean Francois-Poncet.

While the French Communist Party is occasionally critical of Soviet human rights policies, it has been working in tandem with the Russians in foreign policy.

One of the reasons France has apparently been reluctant to let Mr. Arafat visit Mr. Giscard d'Estaing is that the French have been quietly improving their strained relations with Egypt, the odd man out of the Arab world. Improved French relations with Egypt are essential to many other French foreign policy objectives, especially in black Africa, where Egypt is perceived as a valuable ally against subversion by Libya's Moamer Qadhafi.

Libyan challenges to French interests in Africa have also given France a strong incentive to resume working with Egypt after a period of poor relations over French hostility to the Camp David peace accords between Egypt and Israel.

French Foreign Ministry spokesman Jean-Pierre Cabouat seemed to be reflecting a more moderate French view last week when he said, "We haven't condemned Camp David. We don't want to do anything to complicate it, even though we did not bless it."

Ghali Visit

Butros Ghali, Egypt's minister of state for foreign affairs, has visited Paris twice in recent weeks. On the second visit he brought a message to Mr. Giscard d'Estaing from Egyptian President Anwar Sadat.

Everywhere they move in Africa these days, the French seem to find the Libyans in their way, complete with Soviet arms. As one French official said, "When we switched our alliances in Chad and got together with the people in the north, we found the Libyans switching their alliances to people in the south, even though the northerners are Arabs and Moslems. Whatever move we make, the Libyans do its mirror image."

Libya and the Soviet Union were moving to prop Central Africa's Jean Bedel Bokassa before a French-supported coup ousted him.

In this context, Col. Qadhafi, perhaps Moscow's best friend in the Arab world, seems to be one side of a Soviet pincer movement to counteract France's drive to extend its influence in Africa and the Arab world. The other side of that pincer seems to be Mr. Marchais.