

'Cheysson renews support for US missiles' from The Guardian (8 June 1983)

Caption: On 8 June 1983, as the Euromissiles crisis unfolds, British daily newspaper The Guardian reports on the announcement by the French Government that it is renewing its support for the installation of American missiles in Europe.

Source: Schwarz, Walter. "Cheysson renews support for US missiles" from The Guardian. London: Guardian Newspapers. 08.06.1983, p.9.

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France warns Moscow of need for weapons balance • Washington prepares for Geneva

Cheysson renews support for US missiles

From Walter Schwarz
in Paris

The French Government yesterday renewed its support for new American missiles in Europe, during preparations for tomorrow's meeting in Paris of Nato foreign ministers. Officials close to President Mitterrand said France would "assume all its responsibilities in Nato."

The Foreign Minister, Mr Claude Cheysson, said the Soviet Union's "nuclear missiles advantage in Europe must be corrected."

Mr Mitterrand's increasingly committed support for American positions became more controversial after last week's Williamsburg summit. The government's Communist allies criticised what they called a "policy shift" after France signed a joint declaration which appeared to take the installation of cruise and Pershing II missiles for granted, whatever the outcome of the Geneva negotiations.

Mr Georges Marchais, the Communist leader, pointed out that last February Mr Mitterrand's position had been that the Geneva talks should seek to make the installation of new missiles unnecessary.

Later this month the Communists are supporting a mass

"peace picnic" near Paris, organised by the Committee of One Hundred and the Communist-dominated French Movement for Peace.

The Communist criticism has found a discreet echo among the right-wing Gaullist Opposition, which disapproves of what it calls "a slide towards Atlanticism." After Mr Mitterrand's pro-missiles speech to the West German Bundestag last February, and the Williamsburg declaration, this week's Nato summit is seen as the third successive occasion for the alignment of French defence attitudes with Washington. It is the first time since 1966 that the annual Nato council meeting is being held in France.

Mr Cheysson, who is even more outspoken in his pro-American defence attitudes than Mr Mitterrand, yesterday warned a Western European Union meeting in Paris against "any abdication in face of the propaganda campaign over European missiles that seeks to increase the present imbalance in favour of the Soviet Union."

Mr Cheysson said France wanted the imbalance corrected by negotiation, but there was "no question" of French nuclear weapons being included in the Geneva talks.