

weather-vane pragmatists who pursue the Presidency, between democratic leadership and servile obeisance to public opinion. Williams's appreciation of Lincoln would have benefited from a reading of Henry Jaffa's *Crisis of the House Divided*.

The reconciliation of the protracted antagonism in American life requires that both sides come to terms with Abraham Lincoln. The South, however

strongly it identifies with American traditions today, must concede that it once embraced deviations from those traditions, ones that impaired American lives and liberties. Once we have overcome this deviation from the tradition of liberty, we will be in much better condition to counter the perils to liberty embedded in the contemporary counsel of deviations far more dangerous than pragmatism. □

Bouillabaisse by Ear

Denis MacShane: *François Mitterrand: A Political Odyssey*; Universe Books; New York.

by Will Morrisey

Years before many Americans noticed him, France's socialist president made a career while provoking contrary sentiments. He evidently prefers not to be understood. Conservatives governing America must nonetheless decide what to think about a ruler who supports us and opposes the Soviets in Europe while opposing us and supporting Soviet allies in Latin America. This biography can contribute to that effort, although to a small degree. Denis MacShane accurately describes his book as "accessible," not "exhaustive or definitive." It is frequently polemical. "In most capitalist democracies," he laments, "ideas of the Left are restricted either by not being published or by attaining only a limited distribution in book form." A few pages later, he claims to have watched the 1981 French presidential election reports on a television "in a small apartment in a working class district of Paris." As in most such writing, the allegedly matter-of-fact statement is absurd while the patently theatrical one is believable.

Mitterrand can brush facts aside in a similar manner as he strains to realize

the fictive. He came to politics after studying literature and music in Paris during the 1930's. He still "disdains the technical detail of economics" (as MacShane puts it), telling the French: "You are either for the exploiters or the exploited." He sees capitalism as a vast appetite; he ignores its productivity. One might generously describe this as a literary sort of view. Were MacShane and Mitterrand capable only of rhetorical posing this book could pass unremarked. But MacShane to some extent and Mitterrand to a further extent offer more than that.

After Hitler's conquest of Paris, Mitterrand escaped from a prisoner-of-war camp; he worked for the collaborationist government at Vichy while aiding the Resistance. (He managed to earn decorations for both activities.) He entered parliamentary politics after the war, involving himself with a succession of small parties, really "political grouplets," that satisfied "his taste for leadership and position." He won his first election by campaigning against the Communist Party, nationalization, and bureaucracy. "Even with the most charitable interpretation," MacShane intones, "it was a campaign of almost undiluted opportunism. But it worked." In his first ministerial position, he won the respect of Maurice Thorez, the cynical boss of the French Communist Party, by breaking a strike. (Thorez elicits MacShane's most bizarre description: "a close personal friend of Stalin.")

Throughout the 1950's, Mitterrand remained a firm if reformist supporter of French colonialism. As the minister responsible for Overseas Territories, he wooed African nationalists away from the Communist Party, then advocated a similar policy toward Ho Chi Minh and even Mao—who were probably not so susceptible to Gallic pleasantries. About Algerian nationalists he said, "There can only be one form of negotiation: war."

All of this *politique*, real and surreal, came from a man who insisted on his leftist credentials. It undercuts his claim that he opposed de Gaulle's return to power in 1958 simply because too many of the General's supporters "wanted vengeance on the poor," for some unspecified reason. MacShane describes this dissent as "an act of political courage for a man who up to that moment had been considered to be most obsessed with his career." He quickly and sensibly adds that "At the age of forty-one, per-

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Mr. Morrisey is author of *Reflections on De Gaulle* (University Press of America).

haps Mitterrand thought that he could wait a few years until the sixty-eight-year-old de Gaulle vanished and the traditional political forces re-emerged." Indeed, Mitterrand lost his seat in the National Assembly but soon reappeared, running as de Gaulle's main opponent in the 1965 presidential election. A year later, *Le Monde's* editor wrote, "One does not believe in his sincerity so much as his agility."

The same writer nonetheless added that "François Mitterrand, unlike most politicians, is worth more than he appears." The actual Mitterrand excels the fictional one Mitterrand celebrates but prudently fails to embody. His dealings with Marxism and the Communist Party illustrate this. In a 1969 book, Mitterrand "openly embraced Marxist concepts, though he admitted that he had never made a detailed study of Marx." That aversion of the eyes undoubtedly made embracing the ideology less repugnant. He accepted Marx's social/economic determinism but rejected "proletarian" dictatorship: "We are here to conquer power, but only after we have won over the minds of our fellow citizens." He wants democracy as a means and not only as a perpetually deferred end. Marx and Lenin scorn such "bourgeois formalism," and neither address the unconvinced as "fellow citizens." Marxism of the Mitterrand variety retains a place for civility.

It also cares for individuality. MacShane quotes his comment on the prison camp: "Being obliged to live with a mass of people, one gets to know solitude." Politically, this makes liberty, not equality, "the great problem on the road to Socialism." In a passage from his edited diary/notebook, *The Wheat and the Chaff* (Seaver Books; New York; 1982), Mitterrand insists that socialism must "prove ... it has returned to the sources, its own sources, that it is the daughter of the revolutions where one swore 'freedom or death' and kept one's word." A Marxist would complain that these were bourgeois revolutions. To his lasting credit and discredit, Mitterrand is not listening.

Credit, because no Marxist could write that "the worst tyranny is that of the spirit," which will "lie in wait for its prey until the end of time." Discredit, because he prefers, or pretends, to ignore that the communists' willingness to temporize aims at a dictatorship presented lyingly ("dialectically") as a means to effect the "withering away" of the state. Moreover, after deploring the solitude of mass-life and spiritual tyranny, he can stumble into this enumeration of the kinds of "dignity and responsibility" freedom should serve: "abolition of the death penalty; giving women control of their own personal destiny, i.e., contraception and abortion; divorce by mutual consent; the right to vote at age 18, and so on." "Bourgeois" in the best sense, he is also "bourgeois" in the worst sense.

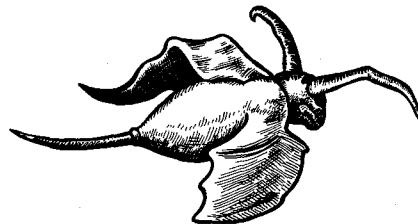
"Bourgeois" socialism can more easily anger Marxists than it does conservatives. MacShane plausibly suggests that after Mitterrand took over direction of the Socialist Party in 1971 the ensuing alliance with George Marchais's Communist Party was a marriage of convenience and was understood as such by both partners. The dissolution of this "Union of the Left" came in September of 1977; Mitterrand has suggested that Marchais acted in response to the Soviet position taken that January condemning such alliances. The conservative argument that a Socialist government would be a Trojan horse lost some of its plausibility. This, along with President Giscard's blunders, France's high unemployment, and Mitterrand's appeal to the Gaullist tradition yielded a victory by three-and-one-half percentage points in the 1981 election.

MacShane surveys the first month of the Mitterrand presidency, citing a 27 percent increase in public spending, the

nationalization of 39 banks (95 percent of French bank funds are now under state control, up from 70 percent), and the nationalization of an additional 14 percent of industry, bringing the total to 32 percent. He wrote the book too early to mention the subsequent violent disorders in Paris as unemployment remained high and inflation got worse. MacShane loses the chance to predict trouble by misunderstanding a conversation Mitterrand had with Henry Kissinger late in 1975. Kissinger, MacShane writes, indulged in an "anti-Communist tirade" that was "circular" and "dialectically pointless." As Mitterrand himself recounts it in *The Wheat and the Chaff*, what Kissinger had to say was quite pointed indeed. Why nationalize industry, he asked, when nationalizing would only cause your head of state to be blamed for every economic problem? The socialist program would make the French less governable than ever.

Mitterrand replied that he sincerely wanted the state to wither away, not by dictatorship but by ever-increasing decentralization and "autogestion"—literally, self-direction or self-rule, both political and economic. He concludes his book by claiming that technology, far from requiring increased hierarchy, can constitute "the decisive instrument of liberation" if a genuinely socialist ethos guides it. "Data processing, biology, nuclear physics: The great fields of knowledge are open to conquistadors setting out in the name of democracy." It makes one think that the "political odyssey" MacShane describes has been undertaken by a Ulysses who rides a horse named Rocinante.

Unlike MacShane, Mitterrand sees Kissinger's point and wishes he had more time to consider it. He is a man with a taste for thinking but without the leisure for sustained thought. This injures him more than it would injure a conservative or moderate politician because, as a democratic socialist, he cannot refer to a well-established social and political tradition that has, so to speak, done a measure of thinking for him. (Democra-



tic socialism has an established intellectual tradition, of course; it is recent but voluminously recorded. However, it takes time to read the many volumes.) The French word *moeurs* means both morals and customs; Mitterrand's socialism has moral sentiments but no customs to make them habitual. This yields precisely what Kissinger foresaw: political overextension.

It also yields lifelong improvisation, and the mistakes that inevitably follow. Mitterrand first opposed the Gaullist constitution's strong presidency and now supports it; he opposed relinquishing any colonies, then bowed to their loss; he opposed French nuclear weapons until he changed his mind after the Soviets overran Czechoslovakia; he opposed de Gaulle, then ran for office as the inheritor of Gaullism; he attacked Giscard for intervening militarily in Chad, then sent in troops himself. He eventually learns the right lessons, which is more than any ideologue can say. But he must learn the hard way. Now that he rules his country, his countrymen share the hard knocks.

Americans will not suffer as much as the French. Mitterrand learned his basic lessons in foreign policy during the 1930's. "The righteous must be stronger than the strong if they want to be involved in world affairs," he wrote in 1938, at the age of 21, criticizing French and British weakness after Hitler's annexation of Austria. Some 40 years later he told Marchais, "I will not go down in history as the person responsible for leaving France unarmed in a world [that] is not." And to Brezhnev, in 1975:

Why these troops and arms massed on the soil of Europe? And those rockets pointing toward our cities? Our specialists have never located so many nor such powerful ones. The state of NATO forces in that sector does not justify such excessive armaments.

MacShane, a much younger man who finds Soviet viciousness harder to believe, suggests that Mitterrand has another motive to avoid breaking with the United States: he fears Allende's fate.

A CIA plot against the life of a French president strikes me as unlikely. Serious fear of same by a French president strikes him as unlikely, too.

Mitterrand will remain anti-Soviet in Europe, anti-U.S. in Latin America. Because he counts for more in Europe than in Latin America he will help more than

he hurts, at least in the short run. His party is another matter. It may drift toward neutralism after Mitterrand goes if Mitterrand does not educate its younger members as he educated himself. Idealist or opportunist, François Mitterrand will not betray the West. But to help save it he will have to become a statesman. □

Cracked Crystal Balls

Alvin Toffler: *Previews and Premises*; William Morrow; New York.

Jeremy Rifkin: *Algeny*; Viking Press; New York.

by Richard Peters

The forecasters have had a bad year. That uncertainty of acuity that characterizes those who predict the weather has long been obvious; the predictions of their brethren in the field of economics are similarly infamous. President Reagan's economic policies were supposed to make 1983 a disaster, but the economy is rapidly improving. The only worrisome aspect of the recovery is that economic forecasters are now waxing more and more optimistic. Alvin Toffler and Jeremy Rifkin are forecasters who attempt much more than mere meteorologists or economists, and whose reach is almost certain to exceed their grasp by an equally greater margin.

Mr. Toffler seems an earnest soul who tries to be objective and to call the shots as he sees them. His latest book, however, could just as well have not been written. There are two reasons for this: first, anyone who has read *The Third Wave* will already know everything Toffler currently believes about the future; second, the format of the book requires a tiresome dialogue with a leftist who asks all the usual Marxist questions. Consequently, Toffler has to recount the

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well-known failures of Marxist analysis and prediction. This is made all the more wearying by the informed reader's immediate recognition that if the leftist could really hear the answers he would long since have stopped asking those kinds of questions.

Mr. Toffler makes a constant plea for women's rights, apparently based on personal prejudices from his childhood and adolescence. This theme, which is minor but emphasized, has little to contribute to the book's thesis and seems to be Mr. Toffler's way of assuring his interlocutor that Toffler, too, is a nice fellow, and as such cares about minorities and other worthy causes. Mr. Rifkin is earnest but not open, and is not content with calling the shots as he sees them. Instead, he is facile and slick. Nor does he mind using exactly the same argument to prove both sides of the question. Inconsistent logic is perhaps the gravest fault of *Algeny*. It is curious that Mr. Rifkin can, in whole sections of the book, follow flawlessly the logical train of a technical argument and then suddenly make statements which are nothing less than leaps of faith. If they are not leaps of faith then they are acts of bad faith: activist propaganda intended to mold the reader's thought, not persuade him of the logic of Mr. Rifkin's argument.

For example, the first part of the book is devoted to an attack on Charles Darwin. The tone is hostile, superior, and condescending. Later Mr. Rifkin announces that Darwin was not an evil man and that Darwin's cosmology was "not the product of intrigue." This comes after all his