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France Blames 2 Aides in Ship Raid

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PARIS, Sept. 25 — Prime Minister Laurent Fabius, trying for the first time to fix ultimate responsibility for the sinking of the antinuclear protest ship Rainbow Warrior, blamed two former senior French Government officials tonight for having given the go-ahead for the operation.

Mr. Fabius, speaking in a regularly scheduled monthly television interview, said political responsibility for the operation belonged to the former Defense Minister, Charles Hernu, who resigned Friday after press disclosures of his involvement.

He said Adm. Pierre Lacoste, the head of the French intelligence agency, who was dismissed Friday, also bore responsibility for what Mr. Fabius called a "bad decision."

New Intelligence Agency Head
It was announced today that Gen. Rene Imbot, the Chief of Staff of the army, had been named Admiral Lacoste's successor as head of the intelligence agency, the General Directorate for External Security.

In making his statement tonight, Mr. Fabius flatly contradicted repeated denials, made in particular by Mr. Hernu, that a Defense Ministry order was given to sink the ship belonging to the environmentalist group Greenpeace. Asked Tuesday whether there had been such an order, Mr. Hernu replied, "That would have been stupid."

Mr. Fabius, discussing the conduct of Mr. Hernu and Admiral Lacoste, said: "My conviction is that in acting both of them were animated by the idea that they had of the interest of the country. My conviction is that responsibility is situated at their level."

"But the decision was bad, its execution was unfortunate and it entailed serious circumstances and consequences," he said.

"In a democracy like ours, the onus is on the political authority, that is, the Minister," Mr. Fabius said, referring to Mr. Hernu.

'I Was Never Informed'

The Prime Minister's move tonight was seen as part of a decision by the Government to try to end the political crisis threatening the credibility of his Socialist Government by drawing a clear line of responsibility. But commentators here said tonight that the widespread suspicion, being encouraged by opposition figures and some newspapers, that Mr. Fabius as well as President François Mitterrand were involved in planning the Greenpeace

operation would not end with the declaration tonight.

In his 15-minute interview tonight, Mr. Fabius denied having any advance knowledge of the operation that sank the protest ship, killing a Greenpeace photographer aboard.

"I was never informed by the Minister of Defense about the preparation of this project," Mr. Fabius said. "When the attack took place, the response to my questions 'Were French services involved?' was always 'No.'"

France to Offer Compensation

He said France would offer compensation to the wife and family of the Greenpeace crew member killed in the attack, Fernando Perreira. He said nothing about an apology to New Zealand, which has sharply condemned the French operation.

Mr. Fabius expressed puzzlement over the apparent clumsiness of the French agents who carried out the attack. Two of them were arrested in New Zealand two days after the sinking of the ship. They are awaiting trial there on charges of murder and arson.

"I ask myself questions," Mr. Fabius said. "Is it possible that someone tried to sabotage the sabotage?"

The Rainbow Warrior was sunk by two explosives attached magnetically to its hull on July 10, shortly before it was to lead a seaborne protest against French nuclear weapons testing in the South Pacific.

Worst Political Crisis

In recent weeks the operation has turned into the worst political crisis faced by the Socialist Government since it came to power in 1981. Press reports discredited repeated assertions of senior officials such as Mr. Hernu that the French intelligence agency did not sink the ship.

On Sunday, Mr. Fabius acknowledged for the first time that agents of the intelligence agency, acting under orders, carried out the operation, but he did not specify who gave the order.

General Imbot, the newly appointed head of the French intelligence agency, had supervised a reorganization of the army, whose former commander had been seen by some commanders as a political appointee of the Socialists. Part of his task, the Government said today, will be to "restore order" in the intelligence service and to "make a report on recent events," an allusion to the Greenpeace affair.

Today the French police extended the detention of three army and intelligence officers accused Tuesday of having disclosed secret information to the

press in the Greenpeace affair and said a fourth person was being sought.

The four are alleged to have provided the press with information that identified the teams of frogmen who carried out the Greenpeace operation in New Zealand as members of the intelligence agency.

In a statement after his appointment to head the intelligence agency, General Imbot said today that the prosecution of the men accused of the press disclosures was part of the "traditional discipline" of the French armed forces.

In his remarks tonight Mr. Fabius did not address several aspects of the Greenpeace operation, including those that have led some commentators to ask whether he himself, as well as President Mitterrand, did not have advance knowledge of the attack.

Press reports have in particular focused on the financing for the operation, which would have had to come either from the office of the Prime Minister or of Mr. Mitterrand.

Report by Civil Servant

An investigation last month by a senior civil servant, Bernard Tricot, found that Mr. Mitterrand's personal military adviser, Gen. Jean Saulnier, had approved of the operation, which was at the time mistakenly presented as an effort to gather information about Greenpeace's protest plans.

Mr. Tricot also said special funds for the Greenpeace operation, estimated to have cost more than \$300,000, were allocated by the Government. The French press has maintained that in normal operations General Saulnier would have to have approved those funds.

Asked tonight where the funds for the operation came from, Mr. Fabius replied that the money represented an "incidental expenditure" that would have been activated by the Government's secretary general, who puts the Prime Minister's seal to the order.

"Laurent Fabius was in the know and he has denied it," an opposition Member of Parliament, Michel Noir, said tonight. "The lies continue. With great dishonesty, the Prime Minister accused Charles Hernu and Admiral Lacoste, passing completely over the budgetary authorizations given by Matignon." The Prime Minister's office is called Matignon.