P.S. to the NEWS

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THE FRANCOPH©NE FAMILY

France's reaction to the recent invasion of Zaire provides an inspiring contrast to the usual vacillating American response to Communist aggression. The decisivenlss and deft footwork of President Valery Giscard d'Estaing contrasts Sharply with President Carter's indecision.

While Andrew Young, President Carter's adviser on Africa, ignored the invasion and continued to call for the overthrow of Rhodesia by its neighbors Zambia and Mozambique, France acted speedily to defend Zaire. French paratroopers were flown to the copper-rich district of Kolwezi, where they stopped the orgy of killings, rapes and looting by Communist and Cuban invaders from Angola and drove them back across the border.

Z.9-ire is the solar plexus of Africa. With an area of more tha!J. 2.5 million • square kilometers and a population of 24 million, Zaire is Africa's third largest state.- Centrally located in the heart of Africa, it borders on ten countries.

If Zaire had fallen to the rebels, .he largest obstacle to the Soviet plan to march from Angola to the Red Sea would have been eliminated. The chances of Zambia's remaining independent would have been next to nil. Rhodesia would have been fatally exposed and South AFrica would have been threatened.

Unlike the Uni:ted States and Britain, France was not intimidated by Soviet charges of colonialism. Giscard's government took the position that its inter vention was in the best interest of the Africans as well as of French investors in Africa, and that Cuban-Soviet aggression is bad for all.

As a writer in the influential Paris.;.Soir explained, France dared to send troops to Zaire "not because it necessarily believed that President Mobuto's regime was a good one, but because it bel i.eved a rebel army that shot men, women and children of all colors drunkenly and indiscriminately was even worse. The fact that

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coincidentally French investment had been protected was jam on the bread. [11]

France has had a long history of influence in Africa. Unlike the British colonial administration, which was essentially pragmatic and decentralized, the French integrated the peoples of their colonies into the political and cultural systems of the mother country.

Instead of encouraging local culture and institutions, France developed a small African elite steeped in French culture and educated in France. They mixed freely with the whites and were often allowed to take prominent positions in France as well as in the colonies. Two current African heads of state are products of this policy: President Felix Houphouet-Boigny of the Ivory Coast and President Leopold Senghor of Senegal. Both are former members of the French government.

The sentimental ties to France resulting from this policy have effectively continued French influence even though the colonies are fully independent. The "Francophone family," as the French-dominated states are popularly known, includes Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Mali, Togo, Benin, Niger, Chad, Cameroun, Central African Empire, Congo, Gabon, Ruanda, Burundi, and now Zaire. Several of these countries have permanent French military bases.

Until the recent invasion of Zaire, that country had been considered an area of Belgian influence rather than French. Formerly known as the Congo, it had been a Belgian colony. But Giscard}ized the initiative from Belgium in sending French paratroopers to Shaba.

Fortunately for the West, the French military presence is also strong in Djibouti, which borders the south end of the Red Sea and is a point of great strategic importance. The French have 5,000 troops there, reinforced by jet fighter planes and naval vessels.

The French are now in a position to block Communist control of the south end of the Red Sea, through which passes oil from the world's largest producer, Saudi Arabia. French activities in Africa are more beneficial to American interests than the Carter=Young-Vance policies of boycotting Rhodesia, aiding Rhodesian invaders., and allowing Cuban/Communist aggressors to conquer country after country.

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