

The view from the Federal Republic

Our Bonn correspondent takes a look at the military strategy debate in Europe

Meetings of the Atlantic Alliance and NATO, running from Nov. 12 through to the full NATO Council meeting ending Dec. 15, are already promising to be the forum that will demonstrate the growing malaise in the NATO alliance, the manifest contrariety of basic political, economic and military interests between the U.S.A. and its European allies. Public statements by a number of officials of the West German government in Bonn, from Chancellor Helmut Schmidt through his Defense Minister Apel and Foreign Minister Genscher leave no doubts as to the West German stance—and the European stance—at the upcoming meetings on the immediate issues at hand.

In May 1978, Chancellor Schmidt obtained from Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev the *written* assurance that the Soviet Union was willing to negotiate a reduction of the “continental strategic weapons” of the Soviet Union. This readiness was reconfirmed in July 1979 when the Chancellor stopped over in Moscow prior to and following the Tokyo summit meeting of Western heads of state. Leonid Brezhnev firmly offered negotiations on these weapons—technically called intermediate-range ballistic missiles—in his recent speech in East Berlin. Bonn is committed to “taking Brezhnev at his word” and will drive for a NATO resolution which conceded to modernization of equivalent NATO weapons *if and only if* the West simultaneously makes an offer to negotiate with the Soviet Union. “And if the negotiations are successful,” Chancellor Schmidt stated in a West German radio interview on Oct. 14, “then we will not need to implement everything that we decide on in the first part, perhaps very little of it ... in the ideal case, none of it. ... This policy will be implemented by the alliance, and Brezhnev expects that,” the Chancellor stated.

The position of the U.S.A., as publicly stated by National Security Council chief Brzezinski, is the precise opposite: There are to be no negotiations with the Soviets until the West has already installed a number of extended-range Pershing II and Cruise missiles to

“counter” the Soviet capabilities. This means a freeze on all negotiations with the Soviet Union for at least three to four years since the West will not have the new weapons to deploy until 1983 at the earliest. Meanwhile, the SALT II treaty still sways uncertainly in the Senate breezes.

Simmering just under the surface of this NATO debate is an as yet unspoken concern of the Federal Republic and all of Europe: The United States is becoming irrevocably committed to channeling Europe toward a “limited European theatre nuclear war” with the Soviet Union. It was understood that Henry Kissinger spoke not merely for himself when he argued, during his performance at the Brussels meeting of Georgetown University’s Center for Strategic and International Affairs, that a war between the West and the Warsaw Pact would occur exclusively in Europe and not with the U.S.A. since the U.S.A. could hardly be expected to invite a shower of Soviet ICBMs on North America by firing American ICBMs. Instead, nuclear weapons in Europe capable of striking into Soviet territory itself need to be installed to “counter” Soviet capabilities without reliance on American ICBMs and American or British submarine-based Polaris missiles.

It is an established fact that the Soviet Union has not increased the numbers of their SS-4 and SS-5 missiles, but are modernizing by means of SS-20 missiles for action in the Middle East and especially against China. The basic commitment expressed by Kissinger and Brzezinski and the basic, consolidated tendencies of American foreign policy as a whole to implant weapons in continental Europe to militarily back up the “Camp David” Mideast policy and the “China card” Asia policy is a commitment to a geostrategic confrontation with the Soviet Union.

Policy disintegration

It is on this issue that a fundamental and unbridgeable gap exists between the interests of continental Europe and Anglo-American geopolitical interests. Yet this issue

remains in the background, only indirectly addressed despite the clarity of public statements by government officials in Bonn on the military security interests of Europe and the legitimate military security interests of the United States.

In his recent interview with the London *Economist*, Chancellor Schmidt was very direct on economic issues. But on issues of military strategy, he confined himself to the remark that "military balance of forces" and strategy are not limited to weapons systems but include a whole range of economic issues as well.

Privately, high-ranking officials of German military institutions are concerned that the U.S.A. is destroying its own basic industrial capacities, its domestic and export potentials. The U.S.A. is "drifting away," it is said.

The only way to bridge the chasm in military security interests is for the United States to reverse its economic policies. "The U.S.A. makes even the Federal Republic, this most stable and strongest of all world economies, look like a midget in terms of its economic potential. But this is only potential. Tricks," reflected in the Camp David and China card military policies, "will not realize that potential."

It is up to the United States to reverse its own economic and military policy disintegration. In the meantime, neither Bonn nor Europe generally will tolerate the military destabilization of Europe. "We cannot, out of our own long-term interests in detente in Europe," Chancellor Schmidt said during his radio interview, "allow the Western Alliance to degenerate step wise into a purely American-German affair." Germany will not be isolated and forced to swallow the "limited nuclear war" fantasies and will instead ensure that negotiations with the Soviets occur, as Brezhnev offered again in his "world important speech" in East Berlin. "The chief impression I have," said Schmidt, "is that Brezhnev, with great persistence and energy, is acting to assure that his life's work, his life's work of the Western policy of the Soviet Union, of the Soviet policy of detente, is not put into question.

"Persons play a great role. If persons were unimportant, it would not matter to us who became U.S. President. If persons were unimportant for foreign policy, it would not matter if Franz Josef Strauss became Chancellor. I do not think that it doesn't matter. . . . The issue here is Brezhnev's life work and I think that the line which General Secretary Brezhnev is pursuing is very clear and easily recognizable."

For Brezhnev and the Warsaw Pact, the issue is, said

Schmidt, that "if the intention of the Western alliance to build up its arms were actually carried through, then the Soviet Union would have to view this as a change, a fundamental change in the strategic situation, and then, in such a case, the Soviet Union would have to take the additional steps necessary for its own security. . . . I am therefore quite confident that Brezhnev wants to use the time of three to four years to negotiate. Our declaration of intent can, in the intervening period of three to four years, be changed, be reduced, if progress in negotiations permits this or even makes it necessary."

Will to detente

Such a statement represents anything *but* "finlandization" or "neutralization" of Germany. Schmidt is demanding that the U.S.A. measure up to and act on its own real interests. "SALT I, SALT II, the Four-Power Agreement on Berlin, for example, none of this would ever have been possible without the American will to detente. And this is a will that is continuous, one we can recognize in the presidency of President Nixon, President Ford, and even that of President Carter," Schmidt added. "The American President is deeply convinced of the necessity of maintaining the military balance of forces in Europe. . . . I know that he is just as powerfully convinced that, on the basis of this balance of forces, detente must be carried forward with the Soviet Union and her allies."

There is a consensus in the Federal Republic on this. The American "will to detente" is the issue and that means ratification of SALT II by the Senate. In Washington, West German Defense Minister Apel stated that the alliance is going to plunge into a profound crisis if SALT II is not ratified. "The facts are these," say military officials, and there is no disagreement whatsoever in the government.

Nor is there any disagreement that a NATO resolution to modernize American "theatre nuclear forces" will be a declaration of intent. The Bonn government has no other point of view than that expressed by the Social Democratic Party's military expert, Alfons Pawelczyk who just returned from arms control discussions in Moscow: "The NATO resolution is to state that the European nations of NATO agree to stationing intermediate-range ballistic missiles to be developed by the United States on its own responsibility under condition that they will not be deployed if arms-control negotiations lead to satisfactory results."

—G. Gregory,
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