

with an "excellent Middle East peace plan" that Carter might learn from.

Christopher met a second time with Schmidt on Jan. 16, and television cameras showed him trembling with rage as he left the meeting. He called an unexpected press conference at the airport before flying on to Paris, but when an impudent reporter asked "Is it true that you and Chancellor Schmidt were in complete agreement?" Christopher closed down the press conference without a word.

### U.S. aims

The aim of Christopher's trip was to sound out European willingness to go along with U.S. military moves in the Persian Gulf, to undertake joint economic actions against the Soviet Union, and to boycott the Moscow Olympics. In addition, Christopher is seeking a far-ranging revision of the so-called "COCOM" agreements restricting sale of high technology to communist countries. The U.S. Defense, State, and Commerce Departments have drafted a proposal for making COCOM, a relic of the Cold War period, into a binding treaty organization, according to the *International Herald Tribune* on Jan. 16. The U.S. goal, according to high-level West German sources, would be to cut off trade to the Soviet Union while favoring China, simultaneously ending government-subsidized credits to the U.S.S.R. and sharply curtailing cultural ties.

That Washington could seriously float such a proposal shows how completely it is misjudging the situation in Europe.

Europe's policy is that detailed by French Foreign Minister Jean François-Poncet in a recent interview (published in last week's *EIR*), and elaborated by the well-informed political commentator for *Le Figaro* newspaper, Paul Marie de la Gorce, Jan. 16. "If France were to go for economic warfare," de la Gorce wrote, "it would be the first one to suffer, and not France alone but also the Europeans, and even more so the Third World. ... France will first and foremost defend its own national interests. ... If the Western economies enter a worsening depression, then the chances for war are increased. ... France will act politically, it will use its diplomacy and continue to push for detente and cooperation with the U.S.S.R."

De la Gorce described the line-up of forces in the West as France backed by West Germany on the one side, and the United States backed by Great Britain on the other, with the British government meanwhile giving full support to British Petroleum and Royal Dutch Shell in undercutting the U.S. boycott of Iranian oil, by concluding agreements to buy Iran's oil at bargain-basement prices.

—Susan Welsh



## France

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### 'In this affair, what must count are national interests...'

*Following are excerpts of an OpEd by foreign policy commentator Paul-Marie de la Gorce which was published in Le Figaro on Jan. 16. Entitled "Controversy over Afghanistan," the article begins by locating Edmond Maire, general secretary of the Socialist Party-allied trade union confederation, François Mitterrand, General Secretary of the French Socialist Party, and, "more unexpectedly," certain circles inside the Gaullist party as having formed a "school" which is calling for France to take a harder position on the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. According to this school:*

... It would be necessary to respond to a major threat with reactions of the same scope—excepting war. And this reaction should be common to all the Western countries. One should avoid introducing the slightest split between Europe and America, and condemn the Soviet Union in the same manner, and in the same terms, adopt the same retaliatory measures and if possible the same economic sanctions.

The proponents of this school obviously cannot be unaware of the economic consequences this would have on France, on its foreign trade and on its international relations. But, according to them, it is more important to respond to the Soviet Union with a mobilization of all its adversaries, with a multiplication of hostile gestures....

They think that the embargo against agricultural and food products will be effective if it means that the U.S.S.R. will have to confront serious supply problems, or have to increase its investment in agriculture to the detriment of industry and armaments, or if it means that the U.S.S.R. will no longer be able to help its poorest allies, those that need food products the most like Vietnam, Cambodia, Angola, Ethiopia, and, to begin with, Afghanistan. For the most part they will admit—even if they won't willingly mention it—that the sanctions will

have damaging effects on the Western economy, but say that the damages for the Soviet Union will be greater.

From the beginning, the analysis of the [French] government was different, and explains its first reactions. And if the official declarations subsequently corresponded more or less to the expectations of the censors of French policy, they in no way changed the evidence of the contradictions between the attitude chosen by France—and, for other reasons by West Germany—and that hoped for by the United States and which Great Britain has adopted. So what is that [French] analysis.

To begin with, a question: was the United States going to react militarily to the Soviet intervention? And an answer: no. It seems that this was never considered in Washington. The conclusion to be drawn was clear: the Soviets will remain in Afghanistan.

So, should economic sanctions, like the Americans want, be taken? Experience does not suggest that they are effective. ... Recently, the main allies of the United States affirmed that they would not substitute their purchase for American purchases of Iranian oil following the embargo declared after the hostage affair. But 10 days ago, the two main British oil companies, Shell and BP, with the agreement of their government, reached new contracts with the Iranian oil company, not only at high prices—about \$30 a barrel—but prices which go beyond previous contracts since they involve 50 percent Iranian interest in the profits made from the refining of exportable quantities. ...

... Already, the embargo decided by Washington on Iranian oil purchases has naturally led to oil price increases, since the Americans are buying on other markets [i.e., the Rotterdam spot market]. ...

In this kind of affair—and the facts we have just cited prove it—it is national interests that count. And France must defend its own—which no one else will defend for it. Over the past years, our foreign trade has only been balanced, or nearly so, because of our trade surplus with the Third World and the socialist countries. ... Does it make sense to believe that the Soviets' aims will be better contained by aggravating the crisis of the Western economies? ...

The best solution is not in economic sanctions which will begin by harming France and Europe, nor in vain gestures about the Olympic games or cultural exchanges. But it remains to orient, to consolidate and to exploit the reactions of a large number of "nonaligned" countries after the Afghan affair, by reinforcing their will and means for independence, especially in the Middle East which is the most directly concerned with the international crisis.

And this is where France can play a great role. Its authority comes precisely from the fact that France provides the example of independence. ...

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## 'Two ways of handling a crisis'

*Following are excerpts from an editorial entitled "The Good Choice?" written by Serge Maffert and published in the French daily Le Figaro Jan. 10.*

The current international crisis has brought forth the appearance of two methods, two "approaches" in response to the Soviet challenge: that of the United States and that of certain European countries, particularly France and West Germany.

After the Soviet intervention in Kabul and the reinforcement of already close links between Afghanistan and the U.S.S.R., President Carter chose to globalize or "worldize" the American response. To an aggression of a local or regional character, he responds on the level of the entire planet. It is sort of the political equivalent of massive nuclear reprisals in relation to a counterattack with conventional weapons.

The United States is directly challenging the Soviet Union in a whole series of fronts: with a freeze on the limitation of strategic arms, a brutal reduction of grain exports, a stop to advanced technology exports, fishing prohibitions in certain zones of the Pacific, etc. In addition, Washington is attempting to reconstitute around America the bloc of its traditional allies, notably Canada and the Europeans. And Carter is especially deliberately playing the Chinese card, joining, at least in part, Peking's views on Soviet "social-hegemonism". ...

At the same time, by transforming the Afghan crisis into a global East-West conflict, the United States, by trying to reconstitute old blocs, threatens to start trouble in many countries, notably Arab and African countries, which might be ready to condemn the U.S.S.R. for its action in Afghanistan, but not to sign up under the star spangled banner. ...

The Franco-German point of view is different, and Giscard d'Estaing and Schmidt were able to make a point of the convergence of their views yesterday. For them, if the Soviet action in Kabul is condemnable, and undermines detente, it does not justify a return to the cold war, nor a generalization of the crisis.

Detente—which is not unconditional—must remain the final, indispensable objective for the equilibrium and peace of Europe. Since it is essentially of a psychological character, it is important to reestablish one of its main components: reciprocal confidence between partners or interlocutors. ...

This method has the advantage of throwing the ball into the Soviet camp. It is up to the U.S.S.R. to let it be known and to prove that it remains committed to detente.