

Schmidt in Moscow: a shift in world leadership

by Susan Welsh

Commenting on the visit of West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt to Moscow June 30-July 1, most of the international press hastened to report that nothing much occurred. The Soviets are still in Afghanistan. *Pravda* abridged Schmidt's banquet speech, in which he strongly urged an immediate troop withdrawal. Schmidt came away optimistic about the possibility of beginning negotiations on medium-range nuclear missiles in Europe, but indications of this were vague. "If progress has indeed been made, it would be the only major diplomatic achievement in Mr. Schmidt's closely watched Moscow summit," was the niggardly remark of Anthony Barbieri, Jr. in the *Baltimore Sun* July 2.

These gentlemen of the press have once again missed the forest for the trees. West Germany and France, taking over the leadership of the Atlantic Alliance from the weak and unstable Carter administration, have put together a war-avoidance package in the spirit of General Charles de Gaulle's "grand design" for a "Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals." Apart from reversing their refusal to negotiate on the "Euromissiles," for the first time, the Soviet leadership has endorsed the principle of joint East-West cooperation to "find a solution to the economic problems of the developing countries."

In addition, West Germany and the U.S.S.R. have signed a 25-year agreement for high-technology economic and scientific cooperation, in defiance of Jimmy Carter's ban on trade with the Soviet Union.

The symbols of entente

The West German government issued a commemorative coin, timed to coincide with the visit. On one side, bearing the inscription *Die Reise nach Moskau* ("The

Trip to Moscow"), are the portraits of Schmidt and Brezhnev. On the other side are Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and Soviet leaders Bulganin and Khrushchev at the 1955 ceremonies formalizing diplomatic ties.

In his banquet speech, Schmidt spoke of "the horrors of war, death, persecution, devastation . . . "We Germans, living in the center of Europe can lose everything and gain nothing in a new war," he stressed. "The people in my country know this. Therefore, they unanimously share the main line of our policy, and it is precisely this which gives our political course consistency and clarity. Our course is a course of peace." In a press conference later, Schmidt noted "with a certain satisfaction, that the Soviet leadership is giving the government of the Federal Republic a special status beyond the importance of our bilateral relations"—in other words, Moscow has recognized Bonn's role as a spokesman for the Western alliance, in view of Washington's abdication of any rational leadership. Commented Radio Moscow July 2: "The summit of the West German and Soviet leaders has set a good example once again. . . . The talks will have a considerable, positive influence on the future of peace and international relations."

Missile negotiations possible

The question of the "Euromissiles" was the subject of particularly intense discussions during the two-day visit in Moscow, and at his concluding press conference Schmidt announced: "I have reason to believe that negotiations will take place." When NATO decided last December to begin production of missiles that for the

first time will be able to reach Soviet targets from Europe, Moscow concluded that the United States was seeking a "first-strike" capability vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. The new NATO missiles will be within four to five minutes flight time of Soviet targets, and therefore can only be compared with the installation of Soviet medium-range missiles in Cuba or Canada, Moscow believes. The invasion of Afghanistan was launched a few days after the NATO decision, as a dramatic demonstration that the U.S.S.R. won't tolerate the shift.

Schmidt has advocated a freeze on the deployment of both Soviet and NATO Euromissiles, pending the result of negotiations. This idea was rejected by the United States (since it wants to install the missiles at all cost) and by the Soviet Union (since such a "freeze" would only affect Warsaw Pact weapons—the NATO ones will not be built for another three years). While Moscow had previously announced itself ready to negotiate, NATO's decision destroyed the basis for negotiations, Soviet officials said.

Schmidt's visit did not dispense with all these knotty problems, but "things have gotten moving again," he told the West German parliament July 3. The Soviets made a new proposal for talks—which could begin even before the ratification of the SALT II treaty by the U.S. Senate—on all nuclear weapons systems not covered by existing disarmament agreements. This would include, for the first time, both the Euromissiles and American "forward-based" systems capable of reaching Soviet territory.

U.S. officials are skeptical of this idea, although Secretary of State Edmund Muskie told reporters that he promised West German Foreign Minister Genscher, who flew to Washington to brief the U.S. government, that "we will study this reaction in a constructive spirit. . . it is worthy of that kind of consideration." But U.S. officials hastened to express the hope that the new Soviet position on negotiations could make it easier politically to go ahead with the deployment of the American Euromissiles anyway!

The West German government spokesman warned: "We feel that things may be brought into motion. But don't forget; it is the United States and not we who will conduct the negotiations, although the missile issue is of urgent interest to us and to all Europeans."

Economic development: task of the century

Chancellor Schmidt in his June 30 speech at the Kremlin banquet in his honor, stressed that global economic development, and particularly solution of the world's energy problems, is the key to preventing war. "We are called upon to work on this task of the century for moral reasons and by force of our joint responsibility

for peace in the world—Western industrial states alongside Eastern states," he said. He praised the proposal made by Brezhnev for a pan-European conference on energy problems.

Foreign Minister Genscher, reporting to the West German parliament July 3, discussed the theme of Third World development at greater length. A peace strategy for the 1980s is required, he said, that will go beyond the limits of East-West relations and include the "South." By the year 2000, there will be six or seven billion more people around, needing food, housing, work and energy. We will have to develop new energy sources, he said, and if we fail to meet this challenge, there will be no positive place for us in history.

The Soviet Union has long been wary of appeals for East-West cooperation in the Third World, arguing that it is not responsible for repairing the damage done by capitalist colonialist policies. Appeals for East-West/North-South cooperation have frequently come from the Brandt Commission, which seeks Soviet acquiescence in imposing a strategy of "appropriate technology" labor-intensive development on the poor countries of the "South." Moscow has stayed clear of this approach. The fact that Soviet leaders have now endorsed the idea of East-West cooperation in the Third World demonstrates their belief that the Franco-German alliance will not impose "zero-growth" austerity, but will seek industrial development.

This high-technology approach is the basis of the 25-year agreement signed during Schmidt's trip. It includes joint development of nuclear power plants in the Soviet Union, exploitation of raw materials, precision instruments, drilling equipment, calculators and electronic components, semi-conductor materials, coal gasification equipment and X-ray technology. In addition a huge gas pipeline deal is under negotiation.

Fury from Washington

The totality of these moves has put the Carter administration into a cold fury. Defense Secretary Harold Brown declared in a visit to Paris July 2 that "The policy of 1935 to 1938 is being repeated in Western Europe and will have the same result"—a reference to the appeasement of Hitler. Although some in Europe think the U.S. is weak, he said, this is an "illusion." "I am here to correct the danger of appeasement. The United States will act strongly against the dangers in Europe and outside Europe. . . . I do not believe, given the enormous Soviet military force, that Europe can, by itself, sustain political independence." He said that the "mistaken belief" that the U.S. is slipping "could lead to neutralization which would really be just another term for a surrender to Soviet domination because Europe really has not much choice in this matter."