

# Franco-German entente: dealing from strength

by Dana Sloan

At the conclusion of an historic five-day state visit to West Germany by French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, he and his host, Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, asserted their determination to take joint leadership in conducting Western Europe's foreign policy and ensuring its military security. The two heads of state, speaking at a July 11 press conference in Bonn, took stock of what they had accomplished in their talks together as well as in the dialogue with the Soviet leadership which Schmidt and Giscard have each opened in face-to-face meetings with Leonid Brezhnev during recent weeks.

In addition to molding continental Europe as a world power which no one—whether in Washington, Peking, London or Ronald Reagan's campaign—can ignore in the 1980s, Schmidt and Giscard resolved to step up Franco-German economic cooperation, especially in advanced technology industries. They also undertook the vital task of organizing the European population behind them, as Giscard demonstrated in speeches which he gave throughout West Germany.

## The Soviet and Arab fronts

The "independent Europe" policy stressed by Schmidt and Giscard during the visit is already showing concrete results on two fronts. One is the response from Moscow: new Soviet negotiating proposals in some of the most complex areas of arms and strategy resulted directly from the efforts of France and West Germany, while the U.S.S.R. officially took note of the Franco-German alliance.

The perspective of cooperation with Europe was the subject of a lengthy analysis in the Soviet government paper *Izvestia* by A. Bovin, a commentator who usually reflects the views of top Soviet officials. While Europe remains "completely loyal to the Atlantic alliance," Bovin acknowledged, it wants to be "an equal partner" and will rightly voice its views on the world scene.

Arab leaders are also discussing reorganization of the international monetary system and investment in Third World industrial development, two interrelated areas which Schmidt and Giscard prioritized two years ago when they drafted the European Monetary System.

During Giscard's tour of West Germany, a group of 25 Saudi and other Arab government and business leaders was in Bonn for talks on reorganizing the international monetary system and to follow up on the so-called triologue: a proposal for applying European technology in the less developed countries, with financing from the oil-rich Arabs. A similar approach was presented by Saudi Arabia and Iraq at a ministerial conference of 20 Arab nations held in Jordan; Iraq, which has extensive ties to France, recommended forming a 15 billion dollar development fund.

Schmidt added a further dimension to Europe's Middle East policy, when he temporarily left the Giscard tour for an appearance in Amsterdam at the 85th birthday celebration of Zionist leader Nahum Goldmann. Goldmann has harshly criticized the extremist policies of Prime Minister Menachem Begin, which he believes will lead to Israel's destruction, while Schmidt was instrumental, at the June summit of European leaders, in drafting an independent European initiative for Middle East peace. In Amsterdam, the West German Chancellor was hailed as a friend of the Jewish people—a measure of confidence that provides important support for the European peace bid.

## European military strategy

The summit has given added momentum to continental Europe's effort to break loose from the Carter administration's foreign policy and the equally upsetting prospects of an American government guided by Ronald Reagan's mentors. Giscard emphasized at the concluding press conference that the French and Ger-

man dialogue with the Soviets has *already* prevented a further breakdown of the international situation toward confrontation.

The week Giscard and Schmidt met, Jimmy Carter drew the knot of alliance with Peking even tighter in talks with Communist Party Chairman Hua Guofeng in Tokyo. In Detroit, the Republican Party issued a platform which likewise adopts the China card and instructs Europe to stay in line—surrendering foreign affairs say-so within the NATO alliance to Washington.

Under these circumstances, Giscard and Schmidt, for the first time, openly discussed military cooperation between the two countries as crucial to ensuring Europe's independence and security. This does not mean that West Germany will suddenly quit NATO's military command as France did under General de Gaulle in 1966, but it adds a steel backbone to the two countries' challenge to what they consider to be Washington's misleadership of the alliance. The announcement by Giscard that France is testing a neutron bomb and building a new generation of nuclear submarines—decisions praised by Schmidt—demonstrates that Europe's choice of détente and economic deals with the East is being taken from strength, not as a stepping-stone to "neutralization," as Henry Kissinger charged.

## A diary of the state visit

### July 7

Upon his arrival in West Germany, President Giscard laid out the theme for the rest of his week-long visit as he spoke in German to a crowd of several thousand in front of City Hall in Bonn. "I have come," he said, to "express the sincere and confident friendship that hereafter unites our two neighboring countries. This trip must be the opportunity to affirm our will to act together, to restore to Europe its role in world affairs."

"Yesterday we went through the phase of reconciliation," he declared, referring to the historic visit of his predecessor Charles de Gaulle in 1962. "We must now begin the phase of joint action to give Europe back its influence in the world."

Dramatically brushing aside the notion of "collective guilt" imposed on two generations of German

people after the war, Giscard declared: "I salute the German people, this great people," who have "made an exceptional contribution in science, art and culture."

In the afternoon, Giscard had his first hour and a half meeting with his host, Helmut Schmidt. The two leaders discussed their recent meetings with Leonid Brezhnev and the subsequent Soviet disarmament proposals.

Giscard then went to lay a wreath in front of the Memorial to the "victims of the war tyranny," and requested that French Ambassador Jean-Pierre Brunet bring a bouquet of red roses to the tomb of Konrad Adenauer, de Gaulle's partner in the first phase of reconciliation between the two countries.

As guest of honor at a banquet given by West German President Karl Carstens, Giscard struck the same theme of the need for Europe to assert itself. "If France and Germany achieve this objective, they will have rendered a great service to peace and the equilibrium of the world which, we note every day, needs a strong and independent Europe."

France and West Germany "must act together to put an end to Europe's self-effacement in the world. . . . Never have the ties been so strong between our two countries. Never have we been so close."

### July 8

After a breakfast meeting with Foreign Affairs Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Giscard left Bonn for the garrison town of Baden-Baden, where France maintains 50,000 troops. Schmidt unexpectedly accompanied the President on this military parade review.

There Giscard introduced a new theme, hailing the military cooperation that has been established between the two countries: "My presence among you, alongside the Federal Chancellor, bears witness to the confident and friendly cooperation which has been built up between our two commands and our two armies."

Noting that one out of every six French servicemen does his military service in Germany, Giscard declared that "in this way, they will come to know the daily life of the principal partner with whom we are building Europe so that its world role and influence will be restored."

"France and Germany are the cement and the spearhead of European construction. It is the Franco-German entente which must give Europe the will and the means to affirm itself in the world."

Later in the day, Giscard spoke to a crowd of some three thousand in Kassel. This time the theme was economic cooperation. "Our two economies are well equipped to confront the final phase of the difficult crisis the world has been going through for the last 18 months, and to constitute a zone of stability and growth

within the Western world. Everyone knows the importance of our economic exchanges. Your region alone buys more from France than the Soviet Union does, and sells us more than Algeria does. Our two great markets have become indispensable to each other. Our two countries must now develop an industrial strategy as partners."

## July 9

Giscard's next stop was Bavaria, for a meeting with Franz-Josef Strauss, regional leader and the Christian Democratic Union's candidate against Schmidt in the Chancellery elections. The "Bavarian bull," as he is known, opened the talks by attacking those who share "the illusion of détente" and those who show "indulgence" towards the Soviet Union—a reference to his guest and the Chancellor which escaped no one.

Giscard responded with a diplomatic tour de force, a speech on German culture, which he concluded by looking straight at Strauss and stating, "I understand your passion for Bavaria," a remark whose intent escaped no one either, including *Le Monde*, which commented, "More crudely put, he would have said: to each his own; leave international politics to me, and I'll leave you your beloved province."

After a grand feast, Giscard left Bavaria for the northern town of Lübeck.

There Giscard was greeted by large crowds of local people and by Gerhard Stoltenberg, Christian Democratic Minister-President of Schleswig-Holstein and former Minister of Scientific Research. Giscard made a moving tribute to Franco-German scientific cooperation.

"What will the scientific and technological universe of the year 2000 look like? And how can we prepare for it together?"

"The results [of growing cooperation] are already before our eyes. . . . It was mixed teams who developed the rocket Ariane, the satellite *Symphony*, the Airbus which, all across the skies, bears witness to the excellence of our joint technology, the high-temperature reactor in Grenoble, the ionospheric diffusion probe, and now joint teams are working on the development of space communications or millimetric radio-astronomy.

"In the field of nuclear energy, our scientists and engineers have accomplished impressive progress in the fast breeder. . . .

"We must take note of this reality which is too often ignored by public opinion in both countries: through these initiatives, through the cooperation of our scientific communities and constant exchange of information and personal contacts, France and Germany have reached the point of no return: we are now engaged in a joint process in the fields of scientific and technologi-

cal research, as well as in their applications."

We must, he said, address the fears that "dizzying progress" has brought forth in the minds of some. "It is up to us to bring forth, to the eyes of those who doubt and who worry, the certain victory of hope."

From the vantage point of having led his own country into the world's most ambitious nuclear program, Giscard declared that "we must demonstrate and repeat that high technologies do not represent some Faustian vision among a handful of people, but that they generate employment, that they are called on—like the steam engine and railroads in their day—to improve the working conditions and the existence of us all, to free us from constraints like the limitation of energy resources which can compromise our very future."

## July 10-11

Back in Bonn for two days of talks with Schmidt and talks between the ministers of the two countries.

At a joint press conference on the final day, Giscard was asked if Europe intended to become a superpower, and he replied that "if by that you mean that the voice of Europe should and will be strongly heard in the great debates of the world, in the great affairs of the world, then I think so."

"The Federal Chancellor and Mr. Genscher's trip to Moscow was not only useful but necessary. All one has to do is to try and imagine what the situation of tension would be like in the world today and how Europe would have been absent from the debate if we had not had those two successive conversations that I held in Warsaw with Mr. Brezhnev and that the Chancellor and Mr. Genscher held in Moscow on the two essential issues of the present time."

"The task which must be accomplished [by Franco-German relations]," he declared, "is a community of destinies. . . . This must lead us toward two types of actions: to coordinate our actions in a systematic and regular fashion in view of the events taking place in the world on the one hand and on the other to make Europe's voice heard together to propose solutions or to suggest actions concerning the development of these events."

In his concluding remarks, the German Chancellor declared that he "expressly welcomed the modernization of the French deterrent force," which Giscard had announced two weeks before the trip.

And finally, "I want to stress my particular approval for the President's statements on Franco-German cooperation to strengthen European awareness and cohesion but also to make a more effective contribution to the maintenance of a military balance in Europe and in the world and to peace."