

## Schmidt calls for European 'assertion'

*The article excerpted here was written by former West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, and published in the weekly Die Zeit on Nov. 20, under the headline, "Europe Must Assert Itself."*

. . . The United States each year spends 6-7% of its GNP for military purposes, the Soviet Union, 12-14%. Gorbachov has no wish to divert a greater portion of his productive forces to the military. In Washington, on the contrary, some hope for an economic war of attrition, which they are convinced they can win.

In fact, however, Reagan, since 1982, had seriously overstrained the efficiency of American capital formation and of savings because of the budget deficit; in 1982, the United States did not need any net flow of capital from abroad in order to finance the domestic need for capital—today, more than \$100 billion per year flows from the rest of the world into the United States. The U.S. foreign debt is growing rapidly. . . .

For the remainder of the 20th century, the alliance of the United States with the nations of Western Europe will continue to be seen as the *conditio sine qua non*. Likewise, leading political circles in America and Canada will in the future consider their alliance with the nations of Western Europe, in their own strategic interests, as indispensable. There is, therefore, no real danger of dissolving the Atlantic alliance, despite the way some try to frighten us with such a vision. However—and this should not be forgotten—there are possibilities for the economic and strategic emancipation of Western Europe within the framework of this alliance.

America remains by far the most important and powerful alliance partner, militarily and politically as well as economically. Today's Washington is inclined to egocentricity, to isolationist egoism. The Europeans must realize that such tendencies from the Americans will not be averted in the least by European obsequiousness, but rather strengthened!

The obvious decline of the influence of Western European governments in Washington is, in part, the result of changes of personnel in Paris, London, and Bonn. More important was and is the structural economic crisis that began in 1973-74, and especially the second oil shock of 1979 and 1980. Those made the nations of Western Europe and the European Community unable to attack their newly erupting

economic problems in a concentrated way, and to oppose, from a common economic basis, the economic-deficit policy of the United States, which began in 1982 and is burdening the entire world. . . .

Thus today there can be discerned no strategic concept for Europe, either in security policy or in economics. Europe lacks leadership. The governments are preoccupied with the problems in their own chicken-coop. . . .

### France holds the key

There remains the possibility of French leadership. President Charles de Gaulle was ready and willing for that at the beginning of the 1960s. . . . The conventional armed forces of France and Germany alone would almost suffice to offer a counterweight to the conventionally armed masses of troops of the Soviet Union and attain a power-political equilibrium. The defender does not need nearly as many soldiers as the aggressor. Naturally, a French supreme commander will be necessary; naturally, some additional conventional armaments will also be necessary. . . .

There are in France more politicians than there are here who can think far into the future. They also know that, in the long run, only a close French-German entente can firmly tie the Federal Republic to the West and simultaneously legitimize our German hopes; the new political elites from the South and West of the United States cannot do so in the long term. Given resolute French leadership and a firm German will to cooperation, there would be three principal problems to solve by the end of the century:

- Acceleration of the presently sluggish economic integration within the framework of the EC by means of construction of a European currency system and an independent, common central banking system to control an ECU currency—with the auxiliary goal of producing a sufficient counterweight to the dollar and the yen;

- Conventional military union, including France;
- Development of a common security and overall strategy. If it becomes clear that the future self-assertion of Europe largely depends on whether and how France will play a leading role in Europe, then the peoples of continental Europe would certainly accept a French leadership role. But the United States would also—it is the most generous nation in the world!—not refuse to accept that, if it could be sure that while the European development might indeed change the form of NATO, it would not endanger NATO's existence, but would rather strengthen it. Finally, the Americans would even be freed of a part of their military presence on the old continent, which is becoming a burden to them. The proposal for a European Defense Community in the early 1950s did not provide for an American supreme commander either.

The Soviet political leadership may be terrified by such aspects of future European developments. . . . But it will welcome the political as well as military ties of the Federal Republic and will eventually come to terms with them. . . .