

Europe seeks solution to Afghan crisis

by Philip Golub

"No one should have the illusion that this is a short-term affair. . . . It is leading to fundamental changes in the world."

—Helmut Schmidt to the Parliament, Feb. 28, 1980

It is characteristic of the state of American-European relations that the most recent European trip of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance has seen a significant worsening of U.S. credibility internationally. Rebuked by Paris, denounced by Chancellor Schmidt only recently as "incalculable," the Carter administration has only a rapidly weakening Margaret Thatcher to defend its hard line confrontationist policies. Even that British support is tempered by more realistic people in the Tory and Labour parties who perhaps understand that an England beset by general strikes, inflation, and massive unemployment cannot seriously hope to face down the Soviet Union in a general political-military conflict.

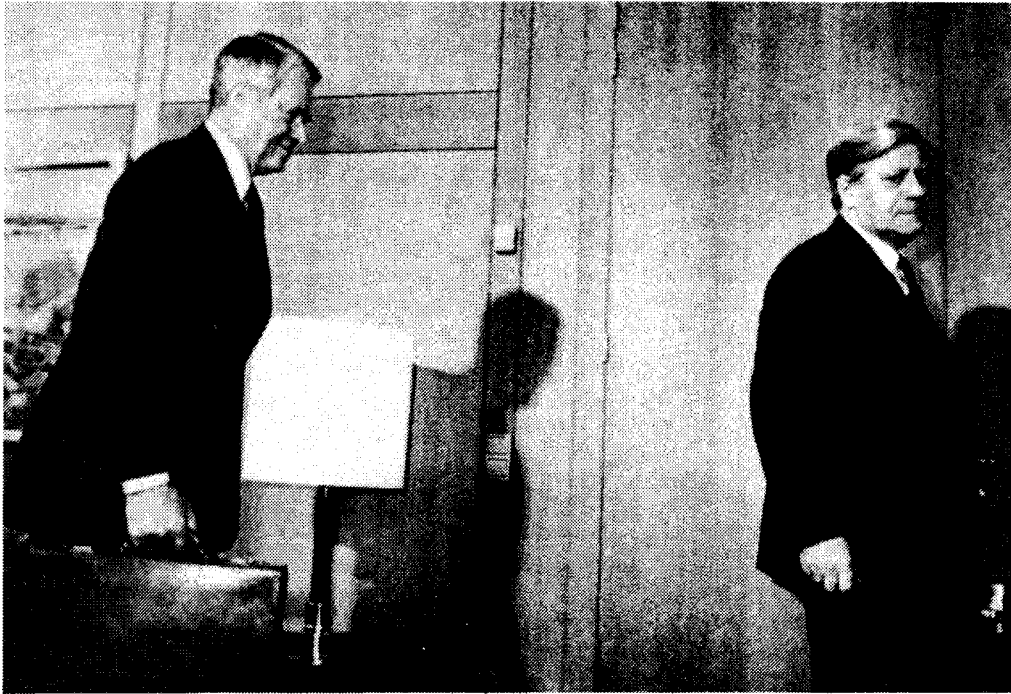
Since the first days of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan the Carter administration has sought to intensify the international crisis. All important channels of communication between Washington and Moscow have been shut down. Diplomatic, intelligence and scientific exchanges and links have been or are being closed off by the administration. One highly placed German security official, comparing the present crisis to the 1962 Cuba crisis, noted with alarm that the level of shutdown undertaken by Washington goes beyond that of any crisis in postwar history. Even at the height of the Cuban affair, the official noted, President Kennedy was particularly

cautious not only to maintain, but to intensify, the contacts with Moscow so as to avoid war. Keeping this in mind, it should not be difficult to interpret the anxiety of Helmut Schmidt when he called upon the United States on Feb. 28 to "reestablish contact with Moscow."

Nor is it surprising that French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing declared in a televised address on the 27th that France's membership in the Atlantic Alliance constrains it to one obligation alone: the military defense of member countries when under direct attack. The French President pointed out that this is certainly not the case in Afghanistan and that France, along with the Federal Republic of Germany and India, are engaged in a global, independent policy aimed at defusing the ongoing crisis and creating the foundations for longer term stability.

France thus submitted a proposal to the EEC's foreign ministers meeting in Rome two weeks ago that Afghanistan be "Finlandized." According to informed observers, the French proposals, in contrast to the subsequent Anglo-American talk of neutralization of the country, were worked out with India as a realistic offer to the Soviet Union. The proposal recognizes fundamental realities: a) Afghanistan has been and will remain in what one can term the Soviet sphere of influence, and b) that a status of nonalignment for Afghanistan under these conditions depends on the end of Chinese-led operations based in Pakistan (something which the Indians are interested in for their own national security's sake).

Germany has quietly, but effectively, supported this



Secretary Cyrus Vance with Chancellor Schmidt, who last week told his cabinet that Carter administration policies were "incalculable."

idea, aware that "this affair is leading to fundamental changes in the world." It is clear from repeated Soviet suggestions, particularly Brezhnev's recent speech on Afghanistan, that the Soviets will indeed withdraw their troops in return for some major reciprocal action on the part of the United States, NATO or U.S.-allied nations. Broader and secret negotiations are therefore underway not only on Afghanistan, but on the Middle East and Central Asia as a whole between Europe and the Soviet Union.

Chancellor Schmidt and Austrian Chancellor Kreisky alluded to this by hinting at the link between Afghanistan and the Mideast. Schmidt analyzed the situation in the following way Feb. 28:

"We consider the independence of the third world as a contribution to world peace and stability. The BRD will support those countries to stabilize themselves economically and politically. We support regional cooperation. We will give economic help to Pakistan, but no military aid. ... This not merely because of the restrictions on our arms exports, but also as we do not want to create a new crisis between India and Pakistan. India plays a very important role in the nonaligned movement and we will take this into account in our policy. We have urgently to settle the Middle East crisis. The condemnation of the Soviet intervention into Afghanistan at the Islamabad conference was only possible in conjunction with the resolution—proposed by Saudi Arabia and Iraq—which condemned the Camp David treaty."

It is of course clear that most developing sector nations and Europe would find such a general solution to the Afghan crisis viable. As far as the Soviet side is concerned, this type of quid pro quo is realistic. It remains to be seen in this specific case whether Israel would be ready in return for security guarantees to be made part of such a deal or whether the U.S. would even consider it.

The model of negotiations is clear. A similar logic of negotiations could apply and does for the soon-to-be-deployed Pershing and cruise missile systems, the Chinese threat against Vietnam, the Cambodian problem, and South Africa.

The U.S. administration has based the totality of its Iran and Central Asian policy on continuous political and military escalation against the Soviets. Now it is confronted with initiatives it cannot ignore, or ignore only at the price of international isolation. The hypocrisy of the administration's behavior over Iran, over Islamic fundamentalism and the U.S. hostages in Teheran, its thoughtless and alarming lurch toward Yugoslavia only days after the news of Tito's health problems, have already pushed Europe to break from the United States government.

If it ignores the offers and furthers the escalation the region will explode. If one is to believe Defense Department spokesman Thomas Ross, the U.S. would be ready to deploy nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union in Central Asia, Iran or the Gulf.

Europe's recent initiatives have not solved the crisis, but have contained the fiery effect of Washington's provocativeness—at least for the time being.

Giscard: 'The goals of France, not of NATO'

On Feb. 26, French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing presented his view of France's foreign policy and then answered questions on French television's "An Hour With the President." An edited text of Giscard's speech and answers follows as translated by our Paris bureau.

When one talks about France's international action, it should not be imagined that its end is to react to events or to locate ourselves in reference to the actions of other powers. France's international actions aim at reaching our own goals, goals that are the goals of France according to the idea we have of our country.

That is, first of all, to defend the interest of France, particularly its security. This is obvious but should always be kept in mind.

The next aim is to seek to maintain peace. First, France is a peaceful country which has no territorial demands on its neighbors, which has no imperialist will concerning any party of the world whatsoever and finally it is a country which suffered on its soil the ruins of the last two world conflicts and which witnessed the birth of these world conflicts and which knows that before the confrontation there is a kind of resignation to the unavoidable confrontation that sets in.

The third aim of our policy is to restore Europe, that is to the group of European countries in its influence over world affairs, an influence Europe had until the last war, but lost and must regain.

And, finally, its fourth goal is to contribute to an organization of the world that would take into account new realities and would correct injustices. These new realities, are the emergence of new powers in the world. The are also the importance of the nonaligned countries in world politics.

Q: On...Afghanistan...Franco-U.S. relations... the Atlantic alliance, it is difficult to both belong to the alliance and pursue an independent policy, what about the criticism of French policy as being fuzzy or hesitating...?

Giscard: No, I don't think so, but here again I think something has to be made clearer. One thing is for me completely clear, but it might not be the case for the Frenchwomen and Frenchmen who are listening. France is part of an alliance. This is nothing new. It has been part of this alliance since 1948. ...But on the other hand, *I believe that the purpose of this treaty has been somewhat*

forgotten. This is why I brought with me this text and I am going to read its central provision.

Reads point 5 of treaty.

This is what France signed in 1948. It is an alliance. That is to say a treaty defining what France's course of action would be if there was an armed attack against one or the other European or North American country. And of course France will respect this commitment.

Therefore, to have an independent policy while having endorsed the provisions of an alliance, this is the normal situation of France. Let me add that we have an alliance, that we pursue an independent policy, that we also have solidarities. For France is not a country which does not have a political system or which is not located anywhere.

France is first of all a western democracy. And thus France feels in solidarity with democratic regimes, with the regimes of freedom throughout the world, Among others of course the western democracies, in America and Europe, but also the free democracies where they exist in Latin America, in Africa or in Asia.

France has links with a number of countries throughout the world, either countries where its language is spoken, or countries that belong as it does to the Latin tradition, or countries with which we had links in the past. We do intend to keep on feeling and demonstrating this solidarity, especially toward African countries to which we intend to contribute to their development and their stability. You can thus see that the international situation of France is that of a country which has an alliance, which has an independent policy and which feels solidarities.

Q: On Afghanistan...Iran...could not French solidarity in the alliance have been more immediate?...On de Gaulle and Cuba crisis...

Giscard: I am not going to draw comparisons between situations that are far apart timewise and that are very different. French action first consisted in saying what we thought about what had happened in Afghanistan, that is, about the intervention of the Soviet armed forces. We said that we thought this intervention to be unacceptable. This word, unacceptable, has a very precise meaning, that of a situation which cannot be accepted. We do not accept the *fait accompli*.

Q: It has been said...that was not strong enough...too late...

Giscard: We shall come back to it. France does not lead a policy of the theater stage. I do not believe diplomatic action consists in multiplying shattering and purposeless declarations. This is not the image of the French head of state I have the intention of giving.

So let me get back to the main problem: is the

withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan a realistic solution which can be taken into consideration? Well, I would say that the question is not one of finding a new solution to a problem: a previous situation has to be reestablished. It is my view that this situation has to present three features. First, the withdrawal of foreign military forces from Afghanistan. Second, the right of the Afghanis to decide for themselves their own affairs. This is a universal right. The third feature of this situation is that Afghanistan must not represent a threat for its neighbors and this, by ensuring that it does not become the stake or the instrument of the rivalry of superpowers. (...) Now then, it is obvious that by keeping open communication channels with the main concerned parties, principally with the Soviet Union, that the possibility of finding bases for such a solution can be measured.

'Solidarity or else' not the best method

Following are excerpts from an editorial in the West German daily Die Zeit written Feb. 21 by its publisher Theo Sommer, known in the past as a staunch defender of the NATO alliance.

In 1956, Konrad Adenauer resisted the "new look" of the Radford plan which changed the NATO strategy of defense of Europe into an early use of tactical nuclear weapons.

In 1966, when Federal Chancellor Erhard wanted to touch the defense budget to readjust his general budget, President Johnson intervened—thus, Erhard's overthrow was preprogrammed.

The American Vietnam war—backed by the Europeans at its beginning—soon poisoned the transatlantic relationship. Washington did not hesitate to demand deployment of Bundeswehr units to Indochina. As the war was being financed by printing money, world inflation was incited.

In August, 1971, Richard Nixon made the western industrialized states shiver when he raised a 10 percent import tax and decoupled the dollar from the gold standard which gave the world currency system of Bretton Woods a blow from which it did not recover again.

The so-called good consultations in the alliance never worked by themselves, writes Sommer, but had always to be worked out in a process of hard negotiating. For example:

The label of "incalculability" has been placed on Carter not in order to put him on a level together with the leaders of the Kremlin (whose Afghan venture wasn't

that incalculable in reality), but to term the leaping character of his acting, which not only raises doubts in his talent for diplomatic business, but also in his reliability.

It is this method of the Carter team to first hit, and then think about it, to first act, then to inform, to first create fait accomplis, then demand solidarity—in other words: submission—which is creating embarrassment in Bonn, and not only there.

If the Soviets would launch a storming of the status quo as fixed by treaty agreements, they would find us ready for resistance and counteraction. As long as they don't do that, we should have no reason for provoking them to attack Europe.

Therefore, it is not cowardly, but wise to think thrice about the American demand for trade war against the Soviet Union. Is it not that trade sanctions can turn into a boomerang which does certain Western countries more damage than the Russians? It is also not decisive that in view of the much denser West German and French trade with the East bloc there can hardly be any imagination of "equality of sacrifice" between continental Europe and the United States. What is crucial is the idea that economic cooperation is in fact bearing hopeful perspectives for the future.

What is the sense of, for example, rejecting cooperation in the energy sector, which is helping us to cover our own demands for natural gas to a larger degree, with the Soviet Union, only because that would help the Russians explore the huge Tjumen oil fields with western money and western technology? Mustn't it be in our own interests...to drill more oil in the Soviet Union and to also deliver the Soviets the needed equipment to prevent them from appearing as buyers or invaders in the oil fields of the Orient in the 1980s—which is a horror vision inside the CIA.

By the way: Do the Americans really intend to force us to become a breaker of contracts by demanding us to cut the Hermes guarantee for businesses with the U.S.S.R.—while they themselves are punctually fulfilling their contract obligations? The Federal Republic has agreed by treaty to endorse cooperation. How can we push for aggravation, therefore?

Sure, when the chips are down—we have to join the Americans, be it trade sanctions or Olympic boycott. ...But it is as sure that enforcing solidarity by military order from the White House is not the right method to promote the stability of the alliance. Carter cannot treat Schmidt like Brezhnev does Honnecker. And he cannot treat Giscard like the Soviet ruler does Ceausescu. The western alliance is based on tuning of interests, not on submission...and the Americans cannot claim a monopoly in political wisdom, not at all under a President Jimmy Carter.