
Diplomatic Strategy

Brezhnev heads for Western Europe

by Rachel Douglas

Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev surprised Poland-watchers from the U.S. State Department to the communist party headquarters of East Germany by flying to Prague April 5 to deliver, not a final, pre-invasion indictment of the Polish leadership, but a qualified vote of confidence.

Said Brezhnev, "The Polish communists, one must suppose, will—with the support of all Polish patriots—prove able in adequate measure to oppose the designs of the enemies of the socialist system." Followed several hours later by an official announcement that the Warsaw Pact's "Soyuz-81" maneuvers in and around Poland were ending, Brezhnev's words to the Czechoslovak party congress meant that the Polish communist party was still, for the time being, in charge in Poland.

While Brezhnev was in Prague, the West German government announced a step by the Soviet president of overriding strategic importance: he will visit Bonn as early as this summer. According to rumor, he may go to France as well.

The Soviet president's last trip to Bonn was in May 1978. It resulted in the unique 25-year cooperation framework known as the "Schmidt-Brezhnev deal," which aimed to ground East-West relations in a joint commitment to industrial expansion and was one stepping stone to the creation of the European Monetary System by Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing a month later.

This year, Brezhnev would be meeting the Western European leaders when they are again on the verge of initiatives in international monetary policy, including a possible advancement of the EMS into a credit-generating phase, for the revitalization of trade.

Brezhnev and Schmidt both also want to talk about arms negotiations, and the West German Chancellor has intervened personally to push this issue.

If Soviet-American talks on limiting medium-range nuclear missiles in Europe do not reopen by the end of this summer, Schmidt told the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in an interview published April 7, the consequences will include the deterioration of *West German-American* relations. Schmidt's comment was directed, particularly, to

the NATO defense ministers' meeting, for which American Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger arrived in Bonn on April 6.

Schmidt himself attended the opening of that meeting, to urge progress on the missile talks. It is an issue that has hung over East-West European relations since a December 1970 NATO decision to build and deploy nearly 600 modern American medium-range rockets in Europe by the mid-1980s. These weapons are of special significance because they are associated with the strategic concept of "limited" or "theater" nuclear war, which the U.S.S.R. rejects.

The NATO decision paired the missile development plan with a proposal to open talks on limiting all missiles of this range stationed in Europe. For months, Moscow insisted that NATO reverse its choice before such talks began. In February, Brezhnev rephrased that policy by calling for a "freeze" on medium-range missile deployment in Europe.

Reports filtering out of West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher's April 2-4 talks in Moscow, where Brezhnev's future trip was broached, indicated serious Soviet interest in discussing European nuclear arms ceilings and even cuts. In the course of five hours with Genscher, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko reportedly moved from merely repeating Brezhnev's "freeze" requirement to asserting Moscow's readiness to start comparing missile figures with the United States.

In his Prague speech, Brezhnev expanded this impression by saying, "Naturally, our proposal for the moratorium is not an end in itself. It has been made with the intention of creating a more favorable atmosphere for talks."

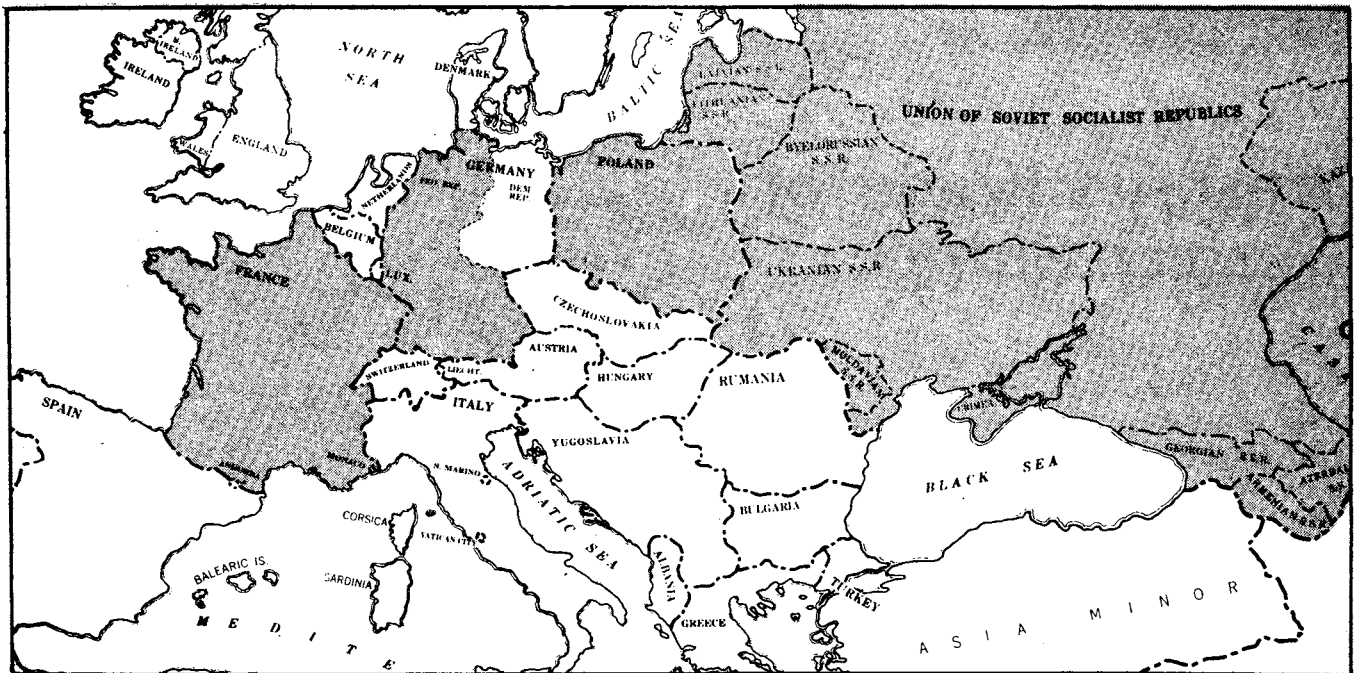
After April 7 talks with Soviet Prime Minister Tikhonov, Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky suggested that Vienna host a Reagan-Brezhnev summit.

Polish uncertainty

In Poland, the leadership and the population await both Soviet and Western decisions on economic assistance and debt relief. In the meantime, the government of Prime Minister Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski is preparing medium-term stabilization measures and long-term reform in time for a party congress now slated for July.

Before that congress is held, there will be secret ballot elections to determine congress delegate status and party posts. If the present leaders are seriously challenged during these preparations, or if the Solidarity unions stage large new strikes, the Soviets will reevaluate their confidence in the Polish party.

The Soviet bloc forces typified by the East Germans and the Czech party, whose leader Gustav Husak was much more strident in condemning the Polish developments than was his guest Brezhnev, certainly will press for that.



The sequence of consultations

March 15: French President Giscard and West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt meet near Strasbourg, France to coordinate their actions and policies on all crucial international issues: lowering of interest rates, the Polish crisis, East-West tensions.

March 23-24: European Council meeting in Maastricht, Holland, where heads of state of all EC countries call on U.S. to lower interest rates.

March 25: West German Defense Minister Hans Apel in the U.S. for talks with Vice-President Bush and Secretary of State Haig.

April 1: Polish Deputy Prime Minister Jagielski in Paris for talks with Giscard and Foreign Minister François-Poncet. France agrees to provide \$800 million aid package this year. Jagielski then comes to U.S.

April 2-3: EC economics and agriculture ministers meet, and wrench an agreement to support European agricultural production from British Prime Minister Thatcher.

April 2-4: West German Foreign Minister Genscher in Moscow for talks with President Brezhnev and Foreign Minister Gromyko; the Polish situation and disarmament negotiations are among topics discussed.

April 2: French Prime Minister Barre arrives in Bonn for talks with Schmidt and other cabinet officials on economic policy; need to lower interest rates in the West is affirmed, and discussion takes place on French and West German loan from OPEC of about \$4 billion.

April 3: French Foreign Trade Minister Cointat in Saudi Arabia for talks on economic cooperation.

April 4: Finance Ministers of the EC countries meet in Breda, Holland and affirm that interest rates are too high throughout the world.

April 4: Brezhnev arrives in Prague for Czechoslovak Communist Party Congress, where he states that Polish communists can defend the state against the enemies of socialism.

April 6: French Defense Minister Galley in Saudi Arabia for talks with Saudi counterpart Prince Aziz who lauds "continuous concord between the two countries in all areas."

April 7: Meeting of NATO defense ministers begins in Bonn. Previously U.S. Defense Secretary Weinberger has visited London, Paris, and Rome.

April 12: Finance ministers and central bank directors arrives in Paris and Bonn for talks with government officials.

April 10: Finance ministers and central bank directors of the U.S., West Germany, France, Great Britain, and Japan meet in London for an interest-rate "disarmament" conference.

May 20: Helmut Schmidt to arrive in U.S. for talks with President Reagan, to be followed by Brezhnev's trip to Bonn.