

# Atlantic Council sees split with Europe

by William Jones

An ominous message was broadcast by the conference which the Atlantic Council held at the U.S. State Department on Nov. 20. The Atlantic Council, a public policy center which serves as an informal political forum for parliamentarians from NATO countries, prides itself on promoting political understanding between western Europe and the United States. But now, the grouping is warning of a serious rift, and even debating whether or not war is possible between the allies, as the worldwide depression deepens.

Harold Brown, who was secretary of defense during the Carter administration, told the group that "if there is a continued recession," this "could lead to a split" between Europe and the United States. There are tendencies in the relationship, he said, which "could become adversarial."

Greater independence on the part of a reunified Germany, which has shown some capacity for acting in defense of its strategic interests, is one thing which has caused dismay in the ranks of the Anglo-Americans. The German push for recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, in opposition to British and American coddling of Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic, was one example.

For another example, during the recent European currency crisis, efforts were made to maintain the value of the French franc, while the British pound was left to fend for itself. By such actions, Germany ruffled the feathers of its would-be Anglo-American taskmasters. At the conference, this could be seen through the criticism of this show of independence on the part of the government of German Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

## War between democracies?

Conference attendees included most of the foreign policy elite of Washington, D.C., as well as a good chunk of the diplomatic and the international press corps. After tepid presentations by former World Bank Director Barber Conable and Brookings Institution analyst Alice Rivlin on the "global marketplace," the heavy salvos came from Harold Brown, who began the second panel entitled "Shaping a New Relationship with Europe."

Brown noted the decline of U.S. military superiority (which he bears as much responsibility for as anyone), and with that, he said, the U.S.-European relationship, always

both cooperative and competitive, would now become increasingly "competitive," even "adversarial." In a discourse about whether democracies could go to war with each other, Brown concluded that, as was manifest in the wars of the Delian League in ancient Greece, "there are convincing arguments" that they can. Brown said that he thought that such a war would never occur, however.

Although Germany was Brown's main target, France, with its increasing "desire for more independence from the United States," also came in for a lambasting. He warned about "a Europe dominated by any single European power," along with renewed Russian expansionism and the emergence of a third nuclear power, on his list of strategic dangers facing the world. Brown recommended that NATO be used to maintain order in the ranks.

Although in the area of military policy, the interests of Europe and the United States "largely coincide," the economic picture is characterized by a "growing competition. "If there is a continued recession," said Brown, "there could be a split between Europe and the United States." He assured his listeners, however, that the danger did not come from Europe "west of the Oder," but rather from the "new European configuration."

## The view from Goldman Sachs

Brown's warnings were seconded by investment banker Robert Hormats, the vice chairman of Goldman Sachs International, who is close to Bill Clinton. "The people who are to build a 'new Europe' have failed," Hormats lamented. "If Germany becomes unhinged from Europe, it will be due to forces here and elsewhere who have not dealt with the problem."

However, it seemed to be not so much a Germany "unhinged" from Europe, but rather a Europe "unhinged" from Anglo-American policy, which was the real problem for Hormats. He was quite perturbed by the fact that the recent measures to bolster the franc were accomplished by a Franco-German operation, with no involvement on the part of the Anglo-Americans. "The United States should have intervened more actively to keep the deutschemark and the franc together," Hormats said. "The absence of the United States there has weakened U.S.-French monetary cooperation."

Hormats gave an indication of what was in store for nations that aren't prepared to toe the line, warning that the "Wilsonian argument of sovereignty" would no longer apply. "Self-government could very well turn into fascism," he said. Hormats urged that the European Community be used as a pillar of the "New Europe," that Clinton transform the Group of Seven industrial nations into an organization which can bring order to their ranks, and urged "multilateral action" to deal with environmental problems and "human rights" issues.