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## Europeans Remain of Two Minds

By Josef Joffe

MUNICH — There are two things that Europeans dislike: too little arms control-cum-détente, and too much of it.

Rule number one holds that West Europeans are always nervous when they face the maneuvers of the two superpowers. Rule number two states that they worry because they expect to lose no matter what the Big Two do — whether Washington and Moscow clash or cozy up to each other.

The Hofdi House ersatz summit offers an excellent example for this perverse pattern. When it failed, West German Social Democrats wrung their hands and declared a "Black Sunday" for Europe and the rest of the world. But a few days earlier they had played an opposite classic in the European angst repertoire, warning of a "condominium" that would sacrifice Europe's interests to great power agreement.

On one level, Europeans look most fondly at Soviet exercises in détente-minded diplomacy. If Mr. Big-West is talking to Mr. Big-East, it is perfectly legitimate for the lesser members of the two alliances to talk trade, travel and regional arms control with each other. In the days of Cold War II, circa 1980-1984, such cross-border contacts raised eyebrows and suspicions in Washington and Moscow as both bloc leaders worked hard to rally their troops in Europe.

And then there is a domestic bonus to détente. Chancellor Helmut Kohl faces an election next January. His center-right coalition, riding the crest of an economic upswing, is expected to win with a handsome margin. But Mr. Kohl is a bit vulnerable on his left flank where his Social Democratic and Green opponents, lacking a good domestic issue, will try to taint him as lapdog of an American president who is against all the good things in life: radical arms reductions, a ban on "star wars," grasping Mikhail Gorbachev's outstretched hands, etc. When American and Soviet hands are clasped, as they seemed to be for at least 11 of the 12 hours in Reykjavik, it becomes that much harder to snipe at President Reagan in order to hit Chancellor Kohl.

A measure of superpower cordiality is also good for Britain's Margaret Thatcher, who must fend off Labor claims that she is the vassal of a cold warrior in Washington.

Still, there must have been sighs of relief in Bonn and London after Mr. Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev left Reykjavik empty-handed. The Soviet leader had dangled a breathtaking

offer: total elimination of medium-range missiles in Europe — SS-20s, Pershing-2s, cruise missiles and all. That (remember rule two) was too much of a good thing.

Mr. Kohl, who is in Washington, is surely making the point to the president. Before he left, Mr. Kohl let it be known that the Big Two dialogue was interrupted at just the "right" moment. While he shared the lofty vision of a nuclear-free world, he also saw a dark side: Soviet conventional superiority on the Continent, which would no longer be counterbalanced by American nuclear might.

Decoded, the chancellor's message to the White House reads: You did not consult us in your rush to agreement, and you ignored our security problems to boot. His defense minister, Manfred Wörner, who was originally scheduled to attend a NATO meeting in Scotland, traveled along with Mr. Kohl instead, to demonstratively drive home the same point.

According to Mr. Wörner, withdrawal of Pershing-2 and cruise missiles would not only leave a grievous gap in the deterrence spectrum but also expose Western Europe to the threat of shorter-range Soviet systems. These can handle almost any targeting job now assigned to the triple-warhead SS-20s that Moscow has offered to dismantle.

An echo from the distant past? Indeed. Almost 10 years ago another chancellor formulated the very complaint that Mr. Kohl has carried to Washington. Accusing President Jimmy Carter of gross negligence, Helmut Schmidt insisted that America must not bargain away Europe's nuclear insurance for a grand deal with the Soviets. So we got Pershing-2 and cruise missiles in 1983. If we trade them away for the removal of the SS-20s, we might solve the medium-range problem only to find ourselves staring down the launchers of the shorter-range SS-21s, 22s and 23s.

Mr. Schmidt is a Social Democrat, Mr. Kohl a conservative. So you don't have to be left or right to worry when the giants are stalking off together. Just being a client state is enough to make you nervous.

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