

When the Giants Stalk, Europe Shivers

By JOSEF JOFFE

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

Rule No. 1 holds that the West Europeans are always nervous when they face the maneuvers of the two superpowers. Rule No. 2 states that they worry because they expect to lose no matter what the Big Two do—whether Washington and Moscow clash in anger or cozy up to each in too intimate an embrace.

The Hofdi House ersatz summit offers an excellent example for this perverse pattern. When it was all over and no agreement had been reached, West German Social Democrats wrung their hands and declared a "Black Sunday" for Europe and the rest of the world. Yet only a few days earlier, the same folks had stressed an opposite classic in the European *angst* repertoire, muttering darkly about a "condominium" that would sacrifice Europe's interests on the altar of great power agreement.

On one level, Europeans look most fondly at Soviet exercises in detente-minded diplomacy. If Mr. Big (West) is talking to Mr. Big (East), then 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 detente. Helmut Kohl, West Germany's Conservative chancellor, faces an election next January. His center-right coalition, riding the crest of an economic upswing, is expected to win with a handsome margin. Yet 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 lap dog of an American President who is against all the

good things in life: radical arms reductions, a ban on "Star Wars," grasping Mikhail S. Gorbachev's outstretched hands, etc. When American and Soviet hands are clasped together, as they seemed to be for at least 11 of the 12 hours in Reykjavik, then it becomes that much harder to snipe at Reagan in order to hit Kohl.

A measure of superpower cordiality is also good for Britain's Margaret Thatcher, who must fend off Labor leader Neil Kinnock's claims that she is the vassal of an unregenerate cold warrior like Reagan.

On the other hand, there must have been some silent sighs of relief in Bonn and London after Reagan and Gorbachev departed empty-handed from Reykjavik. According to the reports, the Soviet leader had dangled a breathtaking offer before

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

Kohl, who is in Washington today, will surely make the point when he meets with the President. Before he left, 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 *a la* Gorbachev, he also saw a dark side: the Soviet Union's age-old conventional superiority on the Continent which would no longer be counter-balanced by American nuclear might.

Decoded, the chancellor's message to the White House read: You did not consult us in your rush to agreement, and you ignored our security problems to boot. His defense minister, Manfred Woerner, who was originally scheduled to attend a meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's nuclear planning group in Scotland, traveled along with Kohl instead so as to demonstratively drive home the same point. According to Woerner (and many NATO experts), the 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. They 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 it is. Almost 10 years ago another German chancellor formulated the very complaint that Kohl carries to Washington today. Accusing President Jimmy Carter of gross negligence, Helmut Schmidt insisted that the United States must not bargain away Europe's nuclear insurance for a grand deal with the Soviet Union. As a result, 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-21, 22 and 23.

Helmut Schmidt was a Social Democrat, Helmut Kohl is a Conservative. Which goes to show that 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.

Josef Joffe is columnist and foreign editor of the Sueddeutsche Zeitung in Munich.

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