

France, Soviets map Eurasian alliance

Bloc for peace and cooperation would supplant NATO

France, her partners across Europe from Bonn to Moscow, and Japan are quickly putting together a precedent-setting drive to replace NATO with a strategic alliance for peace, security, and economic development covering the entire Eurasian land mass.

Under the present circumstances — particularly the suicidal policy drift of the Carter Administration — this new alliance is intended to transform the political and economic realities of the area east of the Atlantic Ocean to conform with the geometry created by the European Monetary System and Fund.

French President Giscard d'Estaing is well situated to maintain a leading role in this development, given his political-strategic experience in swinging the international alliance behind the EMS. Recent French diplomatic thrusts, initiated by Giscard, into the Third World, the East bloc, and Japan, may have results that will outstrip even the historic accomplishments of French President Charles de Gaulle.

As the reports below detail, these activities have sent diplomats criss-crossing Eurasia with unprecedented intensity, with Paris and Moscow the points of convergence.

France and USSR — stabilizing Africa

In Africa, French initiatives in the Maghreb (northwest Africa) and in the Horn of Africa region are the centerpiece of diplomatic efforts with the USSR to bring stability to the various tribal and "liberation" conflicts and organize peace around political and economic entente and cooperation.

Similarly, a pro-French coup in Mauritania two months ago, a renewed diplomatic resurgence of King Juan Carlos's Spain, and a remarkable Algerian policy shift towards France are providing the basis for a compromise settlement of the Western Sahara imbroglio, which had had Algeria, Mauritania, and Morocco entangled over territorial disputes.

Japan, recently visited by French Foreign Affairs Minister Louis de Guiringaud, has a similar crucial role to play in exporting its "American system" of capital-intensive economic development. Japan has contributed to the Eurasian design in the just-concluded cooperation accords with Czechoslovakia.

The Middle East and Latin America are also being drawn into the process. Italian Premier Giulio Andreotti has just concluded a trip to several Middle East capitals in an attempt to turn attention back

toward a Geneva conference following the Camp David disaster.

King Juan Carlos's current trip to Latin America is intended to strengthen Spain's ability to be the EMS "bridge" to South American countries.

— Dana Sloan

International push for Geneva conference emerges

A renewed push for the calling of a Geneva conference this week emerged as the primary tactic of forces linked to the European Monetary System's efforts to resolve tensions in the Middle East.

The drive for Geneva, which includes a great deal of behind the scenes diplomacy as well as public statements, was announced Nov. 18 by Kurt Waldheim, the United Nations Secretary General, in New York. Abandoning his previous reluctance to speak publicly on the subject, Waldheim told a press conference that it was "dangerous" to exclude the USSR from any role in regional peace negotiations. "The Soviet Union is definitely not happy about this development," said Waldheim, who urged that the UN assume primary sponsorship of the Middle East talks and that the Palestine Liberation Organization be included.

The renewed international pressure for Geneva developed at a critical moment in the post-Camp David maneuvering over the conclusion of a separate peace between Egypt and Israel. Western Europe, Japan, and the USSR are all concerned that a bilateral pact between Cairo and Tel Aviv will destabilize the entire area — leading to a U.S.-Soviet confrontation.

So, in the interests of a Middle East peace, considered crucial — or even essential — for the successful establishment of the EMS, the Geneva initiative is underway. Already, the leading Arab states, except Egypt, have embraced the Geneva strategy. Only Israel and Great Britain, and their allies and agents in the United States, are opposed.

Who backs Geneva?

Backing Waldheim's call are the following forces:

- Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti of Italy visited the states of Libya, Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq, where, in each case he discussed Italy's support for Geneva,

according to the Italian press. In Libya, Prime Minister Jalloud explicitly praised the EMS as a good partner for the Arabs. Upon his return to Rome, Andreotti declared that his tour was completely successful and that Italy would be playing a critical role in the search for a Middle East peace.

• In an interview with the West German daily *Der Spiegel*, King Hussein of Jordan called for the convening of Geneva immediately, with the presence of the PLO, as the only possible way to avert a Middle East crisis. Hussein, who supported the resolutions of the Baghdad Arab summit that took place earlier this month, spent two weeks on a private visit to West Germany, where he consulted closely with Bonn officials including Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. According to Hussein, President Sadat in 1977 deliberately wrecked an emerging Geneva strategy, to which Syria, Jordan, and the PLO were agreed, after the Oct. 1 U.S.-Soviet joint statement on the Middle East was issued last year.

• In Paris, several important Arab diplomats and officials consulted with the Giscard government. Most important were Defense Minister Sultan of Saudi Arabia and Foreign Minister Faruq Kaddoumi of the PLO. Reportedly, Sultan pledged that Saudi Arabia would establish much closer relations with the French in view of the American support for Camp David.

Saudi Arabia and the USSR

The major Arab power backing the Geneva conference, of course, is Saudi Arabia. At the Baghdad conference, the Saudis threw their full support to the pan-Arab strategy, including the offer of a huge multi-billion dollar fund to Egypt, in opposition to Camp David.

According to highly informed American sources, Saudi Arabia this week enforced its opposition to Camp David by quietly suspending payment of subsidies to Sadat's regime — a move that reportedly terrified Sadat. "The Arabs *thought* they had made it clear that they intended to cut off payments to Egypt immediately after Camp David," said the source. "Apparently, the message did not get through. But in the past few days, it did."

Reacting, Radio Cairo — not exactly a hotbed of radical ideologues — called for a "revolution" against the leadership of Saudi Arabia. "The day is not far off when their people will rise to bring these rulers down," said Radio Cairo.

The Saudis are enraged in particular by the anti-Islamic "Egyptianization" course pursued by Sadat, who is seeking to restore the heritage of Ptolemaic-Pharaonic Egypt, when the priesthood of the Isis cult controlled the country. Paul-Marie de la Gorce, writing in *Le Figaro*, reported that a significant faction of Saudi princes is considering a move toward establishing ties with the Soviet Union, their ally in support of Geneva.

— Robert Dreyfuss

A settlement in the Western Sahara

Algerian President Houari Boumedienne's first political act upon leaving the Soviet Union after a several-week stay was to dispatch a warm message to President Giscard of France. Flying over French airspace en route to Algeria Nov. 14, Boumedienne stressed Algeria's willingness to "put Franco-Algerian relations on a more healthy and durable basis, while broadening and consolidating cooperation ties." This, he said, hinges upon a settlement, with French participation, of the Western Sahara problem, and added:

"In these times of defiance and tension, France can do much to the extent that it so decides. The powerful ties that it has been able to forge with all the countries of the Maghreb could assign France a choice role . . . giving to cooperation between your great country and the new Maghreb entity an unprecedented impulse. . . . I can assure you that you will always find in myself, in Algeria, and its leaders, attentive, imaginative interlocutors, committed to writing with you, as with all partners of the western basin of the Mediterranean, a new page in history."

At the same time, the semi-official Algerian daily *El Moudjahid* issued an extremely positive commentary on France, with particular reference to France's pivotal role in bringing about a rapprochement between Zaire and Angola following this summer's Belgian-British attempt to foment civil war in the region. To the reader aware of Algeria's acerbic cries against French "neo-imperialism" last summer, this shift will indeed appear dramatic.

Getting down to the nuts and bolts of settling the Western Sahara conflict and integrating the region into the EMS, the new Mauritanian leader Colonel Salek made his first visit to France Nov. 8 accompanied by the head of the Mauritanian central bank, and attended talks with Giscard and the French ministers for foreign affairs, defense, industry and cooperation.

Also in France between Nov. 9 and 16 was Chad's President Malloum accompanied by four ministers, for talks centering around African security and the financing of development projects.

Development to cool the African Horn

French President Giscard and Soviet President Brezhnev have joined forces to settle the conflict in the strategic Horn of Africa region, where Somalia is