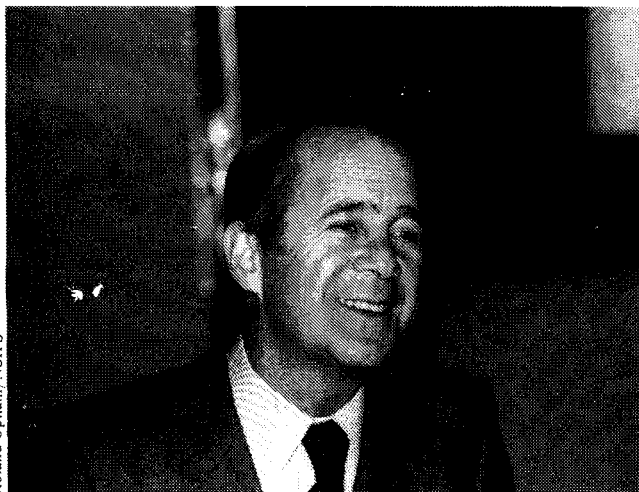


Roland Upham/NSIPS



Jean François-Poncet urges U.S.-Soviet summit meeting

French Foreign Minister Jean François-Poncet, after a meeting with President Reagan in Washington Feb. 25, praised the President's "openness toward dialogue with the Soviet Union," and urged that Reagan take up the offer by Soviet President Brezhnev for a summit meeting.

During his three days of top-level meetings in Washington, the French foreign minister sought to win Reagan over to the French government view that East-West relations ought to be characterized by both "firmness and dialogue"—rather than the confrontationism of Secretary of State Alexander Haig. François-Poncet's presence in the United States on the day that Brezhnev made his summit offer undoubtedly forced Haig's moderate reaction to Brezhnev. It would have been "a terrible public relations mistake" vis-à-vis Europe if Haig had rejected the proposal out of hand, commented the *Christian Science Monitor* Feb. 25.

The following are excerpts from *EIR*'s transcript of his Feb. 25 press conference in Washington.

François-Poncet: I have no real opening statement, but let me just say that my discussions with Haig were in depth, very open on a whole range of international issues, and very friendly. So was my conversation this morning with President Reagan. I was impressed by his friendliness, openness, and consideration he gives to the European view. My general conclusion is that although Europe and the United States have their own perspective,

interests, and traditions—although my country insists on developing its own independent policy—that there is a great deal of similarity in our analyses and our objectives. It is my clear feeling that at the end of those discussions, there is a good start for the relations between my government and new American administration.

We welcome the in-depth examination being undertaken by the new administration on many issues, but this means that it is too early to say on many issues whether we have the same views. . . .

Q: Do you feel the strong rhetoric coming from this administration in regard to the Soviets will have a healthy effect—the desired effect—on Soviet behavior to moderate and improve Soviet international behavior?

A: It seems to me that what I have heard both in private discussion and in public statements is, on the whole, well balanced. It seems to me that there exists on the part of this administration a readiness and openness toward dialogue with the Soviet Union, and this is, of course, also France's view—we have conducted such a dialogue. So it would be misinterpreting to say they are moving in the direction you are indicating.

Q: How do you reconcile the welcome of the Brezhnev offer and the French position against a "Yalta"?

A: There has been no official French statement of a position. I said that, from a first impression, I see a general disposition toward dialogue from the Brezhnev speech. France has bilateral relations with the Soviet Union and we fully intend to develop these bilateral relations at various levels and we welcome this. What we would not welcome, of course, would be a situation in which problems concerning us or Europe were decided in the absence of our country. . . .

We should not take Brezhnev's declarations lightly. He said many things about the French proposal for disarmament in a European conference, but what he said about it is not completely clear. The same for what he said about the French proposals on Afghanistan.

Q: Do you agree with the American analysis of events in El Salvador?

A: This is not the question. We received the visit in Paris of Mr. Eagleburger as a U.S. envoy. He came and showed us evidence that there are arms shipments from the outside to El Salvador. What we see from that and know via other sources does, in fact, seem to confirm that such outside arms are getting in. This amounts to an outside interference. We have seen such things in many areas. We did not get a request to support U.S. policy, but in general, we always condemn that kind of outside interference. What I said this morning is that we are convinced that the situation in Central America requires economic and social reform.