

Will France and Germany play deputy sheriff in the Gulf?

by Michael Liebig

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher gave an interview to the Swiss newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* on Sept. 14, in which she shamelessly declared that a “new world order” was coming into being through the Middle East crisis, and that the “natural friends and allies,” the United States and Great Britain, had “taken over leadership” of this new order.

Two days later, on Sept. 16, there appeared in the London *Sunday Telegraph* an article by Peregrine Worsthorne, the stepson of the grey eminence of British politics of the 1920s and 1930s, Montagu Norman. Worsthorne is today in the inner circle around Thatcher. His article praised the Thatcher policy of a “new world order” under Anglo-American leadership. Germany, Japan, France, and Italy are mere “wealth creators,” who lack the “character” and “genius for leadership” which “imperial values” had bestowed. On the other hand, Great Britain, through its “anti-industrial education system” and its “gentlemanly high culture” had shown the ability to still listen to the “voices of the past.” Thus, Great Britain can confidently take on the historical task of “building and maintaining a new world order,” which would protect the northern industrial states in the face of the “threats from the Third World,” such as those seen at present in the Gulf. Worsthorne went on, “In the foreseeable future there will only be one superpower . . . the United States—and only one European power able to give instant support—Britain.”

The Anglo-American Establishment is determined to unleash a war against Iraq. Every attempt at a diplomatic solution of the Gulf conflict has been systematically sabotaged by London and Washington. Hectic efforts are under way to stage a “Gulf of Tonkin” incident in the Mideast which could then be blamed on Iraq.

The pressure on continental Europe

In this situation, the governments of continental Europe must make a hard decision. Paris, Bonn, and Rome have a

simple choice: Either they make themselves into sheriff’s deputies in the Anglo-Americans’ war, or they say “no” to the Anglo-American war-mongering in the Gulf. Continental Europe can no longer dance at two different weddings. Faced with this fateful decision, French President François Mitterrand, Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti, and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl seem to be twisting in the wind. With all due understanding for the immense difficulties which such a decision entails, it can simply no longer be put off.

Following the summit meeting between Presidents Bush and Gorbachov in Helsinki on Sept. 9—a meeting which went badly for Bush—the British and U.S. governments massively escalated their pressure on continental Europe. Already on Sept. 7, the European Community foreign ministers—with the exception of Great Britain, of course—categorically rejected any financial support for the Anglo-American military deployment into Saudi Arabia and declared themselves in favor of a joint EC-Soviet initiative for a political, non-military solution of the Gulf conflict.

Shortly thereafter came the cudgel-like answer from Washington, threatening a “dramatic worsening” in relations, especially with Germany. The British joined the United States in suggesting that they would not sign the “two plus four” agreement on German reunification on Sept. 12, and almost carried out that threat. U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady were dispatched to Europe. Britain’s diplomacy and press launched a barrage of anti-French propaganda.

On Sept. 14, there occurred in Kuwait what remains a mysterious incident, in which the Iraqi military supposedly entered the residence of the French military attaché, although this has been vigorously denied by the Iraqi government. French President Mitterrand reacted to this by sending additional ground-based, airborne, and seaborne armed forces

totaling over 13,000 troops to Saudi Arabia, and spoke of a "logic which is leading to war." The next day, Chancellor Kohl promised U.S. Secretary of State Baker to immediately make available armaments and support services worth 1.6 billion deutschmarks, and a comparable sum in financial assistance to Egypt, Jordan, and Turkey. The meeting of EC foreign ministers on Sept. 17 resolved to expel all Iraqi military attachés from European Community member states, and called for an air traffic embargo against Iraq.

Should we conclude from this obviously changed attitude in Paris, Bonn, and Rome, that these governments, having given in to the pressure from the Anglo-Americans, are now become active and zealous assistants in the Anglo-Americans' drive to war? The last word has yet to be spoken on this question, even though, as stated above, things cannot remain up in the air much longer.

Bonn, Paris, and Rome are apparently trying to play along with the Anglo-American game in the Gulf, up to a certain point. Bonn is giving the Americans war materiel, while France, Italy, Spain, and the Benelux nations are sending their own military forces into the Gulf region. But this is all billed simply as the carrying out of the embargo against Iraq, and not as part of an offensive military operation against Iraq.

It seems that Western European diplomacy intends in this way to be present "on the spot," in order thereby to gain influence and to create a "controlled environment" which could have a moderating influence on Anglo-American war plans. The hope is that, by means of this diplomatic tactic, the possibility of a political solution of the Gulf conflict can be held open. As a framework for a political solution, the EC foreign ministers are proposing a "Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean." That geographic area is to extend from Morocco to Iran, according to Italian Foreign Minister Gianni De Michelis in a statement on Sept. 18.

A certain amount of queasiness is being clearly registered in Washington and London regarding this diplomatic tactic. The *Washington Post* has expressed concern about the "limitation of the freedom to act" placed on the United States by the presence of Western European troops in the Gulf. Even more explicit was the British military expert Max Hastings, who is close to London government circles. He demanded, in the form of an ultimatum, that France subordinate itself to Anglo-American command, since any other course would bring "chaos and disaster." President Bush, for his part, stated that the United States would "not wait for others" when decisions had to be made.

An 'independent' defense policy?

A second aspect of the Western European reaction to the Anglo-American war drive in the Gulf, is apparently to utilize the crisis in order to create a Western European military capability outside of the NATO member states. This plan was advanced by EC President Jacques Delors and the Italian

government, which currently holds the chairmanship of the EC Council. On Sept. 18, Italian Foreign Minister De Michelis proposed that the EC and the Western European Union (WEU) be merged. Western Europe, he said, must without delay take on a "defense policy dimension." The EC special summit on such a "political union," to be held in November, must lead to binding decisions for the EC's capacity for military action. This idea was also put forward by Kohl and Mitterrand.

However, there is one fundamental problem in accomplishing a merger of the EC and the WEU, namely, that Great Britain is a member of both organizations, thereby rendering it *a priori* impossible to have an independent European defense policy. The aforementioned Thatcher intimate Peregrine Worsthorne has already declared that a militarily united Europe would be "utterly useless," since "in a new world order the readiness to apply force instantly is indispensable," and the mercantile EC would never be able to manage that.

In summary, it can be said that the current diplomatic tactic in Paris, Bonn, and Rome with regard to the Anglo-American war policy in the Gulf will not achieve its intended goal of preventing war. Under conditions whereby the dynamic of events is being dictated by the Anglo-American side, diplomatic tactics are simply no longer enough. It must be made clear to the governments in London and Washington, in the spirit of de Gaulle, that Western Europe will *not* stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the United States and Great Britain in a neo-imperialist war against the Third World to the end of diverting attention from domestic economic collapse. De Gaulle never hesitated to say the same thing clearly in the case of the U.S. war in Vietnam, and acted accordingly.

A courageous voice

Some, at least, are prepared to say what the governments of continental Europe have so far not said. The Catholic daily *Avvenire*, representative of one faction in the Vatican, published an incisive article on Sept. 19 by Middle East analyst Alberto Marantoni, which refutes the Anglo-American public relations propaganda surrounding the Gulf policy.

"An old French proverb says that . . . when you want to kill your cat, you say it is rabid," he writes. "So, people want to gain control over energy sources belonging to others? Then all means are permissible to humiliate the Arab world; all means are permissible to accuse Saddam and to attribute to him any heinous act and any ignominy. . . ."

"What would we have done in the place of Saddam Hussein and of his regime? Would we have allowed the conspiracy by the United States and England in the past 12 months against this country to come to fruition? That the noose around the neck of the Iraqi economy would tighten inexorably until asphyxiation?" In fact, the author concludes, "perhaps we would have done exactly what Saddam Hussein and his regime have done."