

Haig confrontationists versus Schmidt realists: which option will Reagan take?

by Susan Welsh

U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig's efforts to line up Western European support for tough economic and political sanctions against the Soviet Union and Poland failed at the Jan. 11 meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Brussels. The joint declaration issued by the allies pledged only to begin consultation on what measures might be taken in the future, "recognizing that each of the allies will act in accordance with its own situation and laws." Haig, claiming the meeting as a victory, was nonetheless forced to admit that it is "too soon" to tell whether anything further will be done. "We have agreed to look into the question of further action with a specificity that was lacking before"—that was the most the Secretary of State could claim.

Haig was isolated in Brussels because there is a growing perception in Western Europe that his hardline policy is a threat to world peace, does nothing to help the people of Poland, and will ultimately backfire against the Atlantic alliance itself. *Baltimore Sun* commentator Henry Trewhitt wrote Jan. 11 that the Western alliance has rarely displayed greater public uncertainty than at the present time. Trewhitt cited an American specialist in European affairs: "it would be ironic if the greatest long-term political damage from the Polish crisis is to the Western alliance."

Opposition to Haig comes first and foremost from West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and from the Vatican. These two forces, working in close coordination, have been trying to cool the situation and improve East-West relations. Vatican envoys to Poland have been seeking to mediate a peaceful solution. "The Pope and his collaborators are convinced that a cut-off of aid, by aggravating unrest in the population, will push the military authorities to institute even harsher repressive measures," according to the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera*. The Vatican reportedly hopes to link the extension of more aid to a gradual revocation of martial law.

Schmidt and his associates have repeatedly stressed that they view the Vatican as the sole source of reliable information on what is going on in Poland, as opposed to the "exaggerated" stories appearing in much of the

Western news media.

The French government, although it has taken a strong line of attack against the Soviet Union, nevertheless did not appear enthusiastic at the idea of economic sanctions at the Brussels meeting. French President François Mitterrand told reporters that the U.S. sanctions would be more credible "if it wasn't Europe which had to bear the greater burden" of their economic effects. French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson emerged from a meeting with Pope John Paul II to declare France's full agreement with the Vatican's policy.

The British government is publicly profiling itself as the staunchest of U.S. allies, but is privately understood to oppose the sanctions. Expert British analysts interviewed by *EIR* (see below) pointed in particular to the dangers of an unravelling of NATO if Haig's policy is allowed to continue.

'Two factions'

Chancellor Schmidt, following his Jan. 4-6 visit to the United States, indicated to reporters in his traveling party returning to Bonn that he thought the divisions in Western responses to the Poland crisis were not so much a matter among the NATO allies as within the Reagan administration itself. The Chancellor believes there are two groups of policy-makers with access to the President, reported the *New York Times* Jan. 8. One group believes that Western threats and sanctions will force Poland's Gen. Jaruzelski to make concessions; the other, the "realists," believe that the West should try to hold the military government to its promise of continuing reform in Poland. President Reagan is considered to be on the side of the "realists."

Schmidt, in his meetings with President Reagan, went a long way toward winning the President to this view, Washington, D.C. sources report. He emphasized that the root of the deepening international crisis is not so much the events in Poland, but the danger of a world economic depression. Schmidt forcefully argued against any Western policies which would make the Polish crisis worse and threaten peace in Europe, asking Reagan

pointblank: "Do you want me to remain as Chancellor or not?"

With rapport established between Schmidt and Reagan, Haig was temporarily reined in. He went so far as to chastise his own State Department for officials' high-handed treatment of the West German leader. In a press conference Jan. 6, Haig admitted that "as was sharply pointed out to us, some of the differences" allegedly existing between Reagan and Schmidt, according to U.S. press accounts, "did not really exist at all." The source of these speculations, Haig admitted, was "over-eager" State Department officials.

But at his Brussels press conference Jan. 11, Haig was on the warpath again, demanding "action! action!" and calling for the allies to go along with his sanctions. Responding to a journalist who suggested that there was a double standard in criticizing the Polish military takeover but not that in Turkey, Haig replied: "Isn't it time that our Western critics stop their double standard and isn't it time to give greater weight to the precious freedoms and values with all their failings and stop this masochistic tearing down of our values?" Haig complained that "some still do not understand what is happening in Nicaragua or what is at stake in El Salvador."

With such incoherence coming from the State Department, it is no wonder that European observers are reminded of the years of "incalculability" under the Carter administration. In fact, Alexander Haig's position is indistinguishable from that of Carter's national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski. Brzezinski, in recent speeches and interviews, has forecast the imminent demise of the "Russian empire" and has called on the West to tear up the postwar Yalta treaty if the Soviets invade Poland.

EIR asked leading strategic analysts in Great Britain and the United States to comment on these issues, and found an unusual degree of unanimity against the Haig-Brzezinski approach. These experts perceived that the new institutionalization of military power in the East bloc is a shift with far-reaching implications for the future of the Western alliance.

The British experts responded with dismay to Brzezinski's suggestion that the Yalta treaty be torn up. "This is very dangerous" said Dr. Kavan of the University of Sussex. "It would only make the Soviets tougher, more paranoid. You can't forward the process of the internal disintegration from the outside, it can't be done. If you try, just the opposite will happen . . . the bulk of the people will rally behind the government."

John Erickson, a top expert on the Soviet armed forces at the University of Edinburgh, warned that any Western attempt to "unravel" the East bloc would backfire and create "a unilateralist, neutralist Europe," raising the "can of worms" of German reunification.

Interviews

'Ripping up Yalta would be folly'

Mark Burdman of EIR's Wiesbaden bureau spoke to John Erickson, Soviet expert at the University of Edinburgh, on Jan. 7. Erickson had recently returned from a three-week trip to Poland.

Q: I am interested in your assessment of the recent statements by Mitterrand and Brzezinski, as well as in various European press editorials, calling for consideration of the cancellation of the Yalta accords because of the latest situation in Poland. . . .

A: In the first place, this kind of idea represents a gross misunderstanding of Yalta. If people bothered to look at Yalta, the first thing they would realize is that the West gave nothing away, because it had nothing to give. It's about time that myth were squashed. Yalta is very complicated as it applies to Poland, and by coincidence I have just been studying this very problem. As it turns out, there is a case to reconstitute Yalta as it applies to the original arrangements after the war around Poland. This would mean going back to the three-party system: a communist party, a democratic party, and a peasant party. . . . What I am getting at is that it is absolutely necessary to talk historically correctly about Yalta. No one's bothered to read the Yalta accords vis-a-vis Poland. As for the Yalta accords as a whole, it's simply idiotic to talk about cancelling them: think what that would mean in terms of Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia. You'd have to start getting involved in all these situations; it's preposterous. Instead, we should insist on the precedent for reaffirmation of the Polish constitution, which, after all, Jaruzelski has agreed to live up to.

Q: What Mitterrand and Brzezinski seem to have in mind is that the East bloc is beginning to unravel, supposedly as revealed by the Polish situation, and now is the time to turn on the screws. . . .

A: If you say the East bloc is unravelling, what about the Western bloc, is it unravelling too then? Look at what Poland has done to NATO—a hell of a lot! If you push the unravelling of the East, the West will unravel too. You would then be faced with a unilateralist, neutralist Europe, which is a terribly dangerous game to play. It's