

Moscow launches new flank in drive to 'decouple' Germany from its allies

by Konstantin George

Leading defense-related individuals in the Federal Republic of Germany are alarmed at the progress being made by Moscow in pursuit of its primary strategic goal—"decoupling" Western Europe from the United States by breaking off West Germany. The heightened concern reflects the fact that Moscow, in addition to its longstanding frontal offensive to separate West Germany from the United States, has unleashed a flanking attack to promote what one figure connected to the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in West Germany called "inner-European decoupling, that is, to drive a wedge leading to a break between the Federal Republic of Germany and its major Western European allies, above all Britain and France."

It would be wrong to attribute the successes of Moscow's two-pronged decoupling strategy to Soviet efforts alone. The Russian moves are being assisted by a Western decoupling lobby, spearheaded by the U.S. State Department, the Eastern Establishment, Lord Carrington's cronies at the British Foreign Office, and, as we shall see, Trilateral Commission networks in West Germany and France, who have already seriously undermined relations between the government of Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Prime Minister Jacques Chirac.

Franco-German relations have been in a slow but steady deterioration for some months now. West German Chancellor Kohl, under the influence of members of his CDU party who are members and supporters of the Trilateral Commission, has repeatedly snubbed France's newly elected conservative prime minister, Jacques Chirac. According to an article in the West German daily *Die Welt* of July 16, the snubbing had already begun during the French election campaign in the spring, when Kohl made two trips to Paris in which he refused to meet with Chirac, though he did meet with another opposition candidate for prime minister, Raymond Barre, one of the leading Trilateral Commission members in France.

Then in June, when Kohl came to Paris to meet with President Mitterrand, Chirac—now prime minister—went out of his way to ask for a meeting. An unnamed leading Chirac adviser told *Die Welt*: "Chirac set aside an hour's time, and we waited—in vain—at the Hotel Matignon for Kohl, who never showed up. . . . There's no question, that

Prime Minister Chirac regrets that relations between the chancellery and the prime minister's office are not the best."

Chirac's advisers clearly suspect that Kohl is being purposefully misbriefed on France, on both political and straight jurisdictional questions concerning the areas of responsibility of the President and the prime minister under the French Constitution. Kohl has gone to Mitterrand to discuss questions such as a joint Franco-German military helicopter project and a cultural agreement, although both these issues actually fall within the domain of the prime minister. Chirac's adviser fumed to *Die Welt*: "Why does he [Kohl] bother to pay for having an ambassador [in France] when he can't even be properly informed concerning the French Constitution?"

The Kohl-Chirac flap will not be resolved in the near future. After the Chirac camp's quotes appeared in *Die Welt*, the July 17 *Süddeutsche Zeitung* carried a short note, citing a Bonn government spokesman that no Kohl-Chirac meetings would occur this summer.

'Operation Cattenom'

The CDU's Trilateral networks are now throwing another monkey wrench into Franco-German relations, by denouncing France's plans to start up its new nuclear power plant at Cattenom, some 10 kilometers from the German border. On July 16, the CDU of the states of North-Rhine Westphalia, Baden-Württemberg, and Saarland issued statements protesting the Cattenom facility. The CDU of North-Rhine Westphalia is headed by Trilateral Commission member Kurt Biedenkopf.

For weeks now, the German Social Democracy (SPD), spearheaded by Oskar Lafontaine, the governor of the Saarland (bordering on the part of France where the Cattenom site is), has been holding regular demonstrations and protests against France for its pro-nuclear policy—as has the Green Party. Lafontaine is on record advocating a German pullout from NATO.

The Soviet diplomatic, political, and propaganda moves over the past weeks, playing on the imperial "divide and conquer" principle, are—on the surface—diametrically op-

posite toward West Germany on the one hand, and France and Britain on the other. West Germany is being subjected to a "low-intensity war," punctuated with bombings, murders of leading figures, and violent demonstrations by the Communist Party, Green Party, and hard-core terrorists. Meanwhile, the Soviet government misses no chance to heap abuse on the Kohl government, under pretenses ranging from West German participation in the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), to the alleged "growth of neo-Nazi and revanchist forces" in Germany.

Izvestia on July 4 carried a feature denouncing Franz Josef Strauss, the head of the CDU's Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union, as a "fascist" comparable to Hitler. Strauss was described as: "Washington's friend . . . carrying out a crusade against 'the Red-Green danger' . . . and the 'Threat from the East' . . . Strauss gets his ideas from fascism. . . . Although no one is talking about it, the community is comparing this man to Hitler."

Two days later, July 6, the Soviet military newspaper, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, ran a feature denouncing "growing revanchist forces in West Germany." That same week, the Russian's chief Geneva negotiator, Viktor Karpov, after talks with the Bonn foreign ministry, held a special press conference at the Soviet embassy in Bonn, to denounce the West German government for "placing obstacles" before the Geneva talks on medium-range missiles.

Once the decoupling strategy has succeeded in breaking Germany from both the United States and its main West European allies, then Moscow would make a "grand offer" in the manner of the 1952 Stalin Note, holding forth the prospect of a "neutral, reunified Germany," as the vassal of a Europe dominated by Russia.

Playing to England and France

To intensify Bonn's sense of isolation and rejection, Soviet policy is aimed at cultivating relations with Britain and France, stroking the egos and sensibilities of the French and British leaders through fulsome praise in the Soviet media. This phenomenon was exhibited as never before during Mitterrand's Moscow visit during the second week in July, and the visit to London July 13 by Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze. These threads of Soviet policy were manifested as early as Gorbachov's December 1984 stay in Britain, where, through extensive meetings with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe, he began the cultivation of the intended "special relation" to Great Britain.

Gorbachov's first—and so far only—visit to a Western country in his capacity as general secretary, was to France in November 1985. This visit was returned by Mitterrand this July, and Gorbachov has invited Mrs. Thatcher to visit the Soviet Union in 1987—the invitation was conveyed by Shevardnadze in London to the British prime minister. His London visit marked the first time that Shevardnadze has gone, on a

bilateral basis, to visit any Western country since becoming foreign minister on July 2, 1985.

Mitterrand's visit to the Soviet Union was hailed in the Soviet press, and he in turn was no less flattering toward Gorbachov, calling him "the first modern person to lead the Soviet Union," whose "primary goal" was to "raise Soviet living standards," and adding: "but because trust is lacking [referring to America], he has to compete with weapons." On July 10, Mitterrand held a press conference in Moscow and called Gorbachov's "disarmament" proposals "really spectacular." He announced his "full agreement" with Gorbachov's proposal for an international conference on the Middle East. Mitterrand named the SDI "the main obstacle" to a Reagan-Gorbachov summit, and demanded that the United States adhere to SALT II.

Soviet foreign ministry chief spokesman Gerasimov, at a July 9 press conference, remarked that Gorbachov had told Mitterrand that he "wants the largest possible expansion in Franco-Soviet economic, scientific-technological and cultural relations." The TV commentary supplied by TASS stressed that the meetings underscored "not only the traditions and the sympathy which the Soviet and French peoples have for each other, but most important of all, the objective interests of the Soviet Union and France, the two biggest states of Europe, in maintaining peace both within and beyond the continent."

The Russian magazine *New Times* said it was Mitterrand "who, at the Bonn summit (May 1985) of the 'Big 7,' stood up to the pressure of the chief of the White House."

South Africa and the old czarist bonds

Three days after Mitterrand's departure, Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze arrived in London on July 13 for a three-day visit that included two meetings with Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe and a long meeting with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Shevardnadze's avowed purpose was to lobby Britain to pressure the United States to make concessions on the SDI at the Geneva talks, and also regarding the Middle East and South African situations.

While full details on Shevardnadze's meetings are not available, it is clear from several signals that Britain went far in accommodating Moscow. Speaking in the House of Commons after his talks with Shevardnadze, Howe declared regarding South Africa, that on his forthcoming trip to South Africa, he would recommend at least limited sanctions. "Most urgently," he said, "I will press on them [the South African government] the need to release Nelson Mandela . . . and unban the ANC and other political parties."

The other spectacular signal was the announcement that Britain and the Soviet Union had reached a settlement in which Britain—after nearly 70 years—renounces all claims of holders of czarist bonds. The nominal worth of the bonds in British possession had reached some £100 billion.

Soviet television commented that "certain positive changes" have occurred in British policies.