

Finlandisation of Europe

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PARIS - March 6 could be a historic day for Europe. Elections will be held in both West Germany and France. In Germany the conservatives could be returned to power with a clear mandate for a strong geo-political policy. In France the result of the municipal elections could be more than a swing back to the conservatives and could constitute a clear rejection of the socialist government.

But it is salutary to consider the alternative. In Germany the conservative alliance could fail to obtain an absolute majority, the liberals (Free Democrats) could obtain less than 5% of the vote and be eliminated from national politics and the Social Democrats (SDP) could govern with de facto backing from the Greens. To satisfy the Greens the SDP would have to agree to ban the installation of the new generation of intermediate range US missiles, by no means an inconceivable concession.

A new Social Democratic government shouldn't be confused with its predecessors. At best it would be of the radical left, with Helmut Schmidt replaced by Hans Vogel and Willy Brandt and the old partnership with the liberals by an alliance with the Greens. Many of the Greens' leaders are sincere and most of their voters well-meaning, but their organization is deeply infiltrated by communists and their allies. This is no surprise, because the Greens' strategy conforms perfectly with the principal strategy of the Soviets - unilateral nuclear disarmament of Western Europe.

Already, under Chancellor Schmidt, the SDP had wavered on the missiles issue and went so far as to commit itself to a 'security partnership with the East' at its party conference last April. This would be a negation of NATO. A new SDP government could be expected to go further, and Mr Schmidt's successor, Mr Vogel, has already made the pilgrimage to Moscow.

In France the municipal elections could be no more than a setback for the Socialist-Communist alliance. This would allow them to pursue their strategy - which so far has been slowed, but remains unaltered. The realists in the government understand that to avoid reaction, changes must be progressive. Citizens can accommodate decline in fundamental freedoms so long as the pace is not too brutal.

But French industry, weakened by nationalizations, communist union agitation and socialist demagoguery, would find it more difficult to compete either in its home market or internationally. The drift to protectionism would accelerate at home while industry would look abroad to the softer markets of Eastern Europe. We would be told that France could become the Japan of those markets, so industry would become more dependent on the Eastern bloc.

French foreign policy would continue to be hard to analyze. The words are more or less acceptable, but the deeds are not. France's relationships with Nicaragua, Namibia's SWAPO terrorists and Fidel Castro, along with its involvement in the Siberian gas pipeline, support the Soviet empire, not the Atlantic alliance. No doubt it is difficult for the socialists to be allied in a government with a firmly pro-Soviet Communist Party.

The dangers of such developments in Germany and France aren't difficult to assess. The US would have to reconsider its policy toward Europe. The Americans couldn't be expected to leave their troops in a Europe in which the balance of power lay so overwhelmingly with the Soviets. US troops in Europe would be no more than hostages.

At the same time the Soviet propaganda machine would redouble its effort to turn American public opinion against Europe. It would continue to orchestrate demonstrations against US institutions and leaders. The media would ensure that every US humiliation

was given maximum coverage. The US public wouldn't be told how, why, and by whom, such demonstrations are organized. The attraction of isolationism would grow in the US.

Thereafter the position in Europe could be described in stark terms. The US would withdraw its troops. The Soviets would have overwhelming military dominance. Governments that included Communists or groups related closely to them would be in power in France and Germany; such governments would allow local Communist officials to consolidate their grip on key areas of national life such as the unions, media, education and systems of justice. The French economy and to a lesser degree Germany's would be in symbiosis with East Europe. As France and Germany are the heart of the Continent, the rest of Europe would follow their lead. As for Britain, if in these circumstances the Conservatives were reelected, there would be a withdrawal from Europe and Britain would revert to its traditional offshore role. If the left were to regain power, the next Labor government would find renewed enthusiasm to be a part of socialist Europe.

Conditions would then be ripe for a de facto neo-Yalta. The Soviets would encourage the Americans to revert to the territories covered by the Monroe Doctrine in exchange for reduced Soviet pressure in the Caribbean and Central America. Europe, thoroughly Finlandized, could fall like a rotten fruit without a shot being fired. Europe would progressively become a protectorate of the Soviets.

All this will probably not happen on this occasion. But Europeans would do well to understand the risks.