

# PRIVATE CITIZENS, PUBLIC POLICIES... ...BRANDT'S OSTPOLITIK

It is not unknown for private citizens, distressed with their country's policies, to attempt to overcome, circumvent or block the operation of those policies. And such citizens are usually slapped down. That is, if they succeed in getting much attention they are warned that they are overstepping the bounds of their responsibilities and rights. It is the task of their elected and appointed representatives to negotiate with foreign powers.

The question of private citizens engaging in diplomacy has arisen several times in recent years over the issue of Vietnam. In spite of the charges and counter-charges that have been flung back and forth, no great shift, no real dent has been made by private citizens on the policies of the United States or its allies. Neither Harry Ashmore, who conducted peace probes with what he understood to be State Department support, nor Rennie Davis, who suggested that the American people declare peace with the North Vietnamese, incurred more than sympathy or scorn. For their efforts bore no fruit.

Now, however, a number of private U.S. citizens have engaged in what are normally regarded as the preserves of duly constituted authorities. And they are powerful enough so that their voices will not go unnoticed, their views unattended to. More specifically, a number of American citizens, including Dean Acheson, George Ball, Lucius Clay and John McCloy, have publicly criticized Willy Brandt, Chancellor of West Germany, for his *Ostpolitik*, the new Eastern policy he has enunciated.

The policy: To normalize relations with the Communist East, with Russia given, of course, first priority, and to maintain close ties with the U.S. and West Germany's other allies. The initial program: Signing an agreement with the Soviets renouncing the use of force; acknowledging the present frontiers between the East and West of Europe; acknowledging the present Western boundary of Poland (thus renouncing claims to land long held by Germany); establishing closer relations with the East Germans.

This policy and the initial steps toward its implementation are an attempt by Willy Brandt to come to terms with long-standing conditions, to forge for West Germany from its position of achieved strength a policy of its own, in accordance with its own interests. Since that is what nation-states are traditionally expected to do, why the great concern for Herr Brandt's policies, why Dean Acheson's public observation that Herr Brandt's "mad race to Moscow" should be slowed down?

The fear of some policy-planners is—to borrow the description of *U.S. News and World Report*—that Chancellor Brandt “is the man who is, perhaps unknowingly or otherwise, on the verge of handing over the continent to the Reds,” who is “selling out the Western Alliance in his anxiety to strike a bargain with the Soviet Union and other European Communist States.”

Well, those are large fears and the substantive issues are great indeed. But can one believe that Willy Brandt is much less sophisticated about Soviet intentions and practices than his American friends? Little in Brandt's life or career substantiates such a belief. He has been long known as a pro-Western, anti-fascist, anti-Communist political leader who has served honorably as the mayor of West Berlin—no sinecure—and as Bonn's Foreign Minister. Furthermore, he has said that his *Ostpolitik*, which is stirring up so much controversy, is based solidly upon his *Westpolitik*. He acknowledges, indeed insists, that West Germany must maintain close ties with the U.S., that U.S. forces in Europe are necessary until the situation resolves itself more favorably.

But, it is argued, even if we grant Brandt's sincerity and intelligence, may he not yet be wrong? Is it not possible that in his understandable need to forge policies for West Germany, to assume a position of political leadership in Europe, that he minimizes, discounts or simply fails to grasp the larger strategies which must be the concern of the United States to which his own plans run counter?

Yes, all this is possible. Such possibilities constitute much of the stuff of international diplomacy. But there are channels for the relatively orderly disposition of such problems as they arise. We have the State Department and a President, for example, who are aware of and responsible for forging the necessary decisions. If Messrs. Ball, Acheson and others wish to convey their informed concerns to those in charge, they have the means to do so. What they are doing, however, is to use both their knowledge of German affairs, their reputations within Germany, and political clout at home to campaign publicly against a West German policy which they fail to approve.

Is such behavior responsible? The issues themselves aside, there is little doubt that were people with sharply different views to engage in analogous activities they would receive a definite, no-nonsense, swift reply to that question. The question is worth pursuing. J.F.

## THE TREACHEROUS TRAP

Some years ago, in a document issuing from Vatican Council II, the fathers of the Catholic Church described the arms race as a “treacherous trap.” Of all the descriptions lavished upon the arms race, that still stands as the most durable, most applicable today as yesterday. The ongoing SALT talks stand a chance of becoming a part of the treachery, a part of the trap.

Established to explore the avenues that might lead to strategic arms limitation, the SALT talks, it is reported, may lead to another step in the race. If so, it would be irony compounded, with concomitant risk. It was Reinhold Niebuhr who described a situation as ironic “if strength becomes weakness because of the vanity to which strength may prompt the mighty man or nation; if security is transmitted into insecurity because too much reliance is placed upon it; if wisdom becomes folly because it does not know its own limits.”

The quotation is apt here because the U.S. and the USSR move into the arms race, and into the arms talks with real strength, the desire for security and with a measure of wisdom. They are not stupid, weak nor ill-informed men who have the responsibility for the decisions that may emerge from the SALT talks. Quite the reverse. But if, as it is reported, they are unable to agree on the limitation of the A.B.M. systems, more potent offensive systems will follow. Fortunately, it is also reported that the USSR is interested in such limitations. This does not mean that the U.S. must agree immediately and without examination to a mutual pact to limit the development of the A.B.M. systems. But there is real reason to take some risk here. There is, in fact, risk in either direction, but one leads further into the treacherous trap, the other holds out hope that we can back some distance away from it.

We announce with regret the departure of Dr. Ernest Lefever from the masthead of *worldview*. After one year he has, he informs us, found the pressure of his other work too great to allow him to continue as a contributing editor. To do publicly what we have done privately, we would like to thank him for the singular contribution he has made to *worldview* by the very clear expression of definite views, and we invite him to send letters and articles as his time and interest allow.