

ADDRESS OF SENATOR PAUL TSONGAS

SWISS INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
JULY 8, 1980
UNIVERSITY OF ZURICH
ZURICH, SWITZERLAND

EUROPEAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS IN THE 1980's

Professor Frei, Dr. Halbheer, distinguished guests, it is an honor to speak at the Swiss Institute of International Studies. I am most grateful to the American-Swiss Association for inviting me here to appear before such an informed and sophisticated audience.

If I had any good sense, I would confine my remarks to a turgid analysis of European-American business activities in the Third World, a subject I know fairly well. But the sponsors of this lecture series have urged me to speak on European-American relations in the 1980's. And in a burst of reckless abandon I agreed to take it on. Now I must become a futurologist in front of your very eyes, not such an easy task, and a very high risk one at that!

Any discussion of Europe and the United States must begin with the NATO Alliance. This bulwark of the free world has endured for over thirty years, and like many old and familiar friends, we tend to take her for granted. Among most Americans there is an assumption that the Atlantic Alliance began with Genesis and will survive Armageddon. Perhaps many Europeans feel the same way. It is easy to be complacent about this relationship, simply because there has never been a severe enough crisis to disrupt it.

We who try to follow the issue closely, we whose business it is to monitor the foundations of international order, we are less complacent

about the Atlantic Alliance. There is, in fact, growing concern in and out of my government. One need only read the newspapers to discover the reasons why.

It is not necessary to lay out a detailed description of the Alliance disputes, especially to an audience as informed as this one.

We all know where the trouble spots in the Alliance are: detente, the Middle East, and new military commitments. These three issues are broad and overlap one another. In each case, there is considerable misunderstanding as well as genuine differences.

In terms of the Soviets and detente, we in the U.S. approach the question in our own peculiar way. Most of us see detente as a failure. We see the Soviets as an unrestrained competitor and even as an adversary. In the past five years, under the cloak of detente, most Americans believe that the Soviets have taken advantage of us. They have launched their surrogates on adventures in Angola, Ethiopia, and elsewhere. They have built up their nuclear and conventional forces much faster than we have. They have invaded Afghanistan and they have not liberalized their totalitarian system.

The American view of detente is, I grant you, a form of tunnel vision. We are unable or unwilling to accept that the Soviets are a world power equal to the U.S. We will not permit the Soviets to behave as we do - sending troops all around the globe, manning military bases near and far, allying with nations on the Soviet borders. We want to be as we were in the 1950's, the "mightiest nation on earth" with no credible rivals. We long to restore our greatness and return to uncontested dominance in world affairs. Detente has become for many Americans a code word for "surrender" and "appeasement". This is why Americans as a whole regard

detente as a dead letter.

I have taken some time to explain how Americans feel on detente only because the American perspective is so much different than yours. Detente is a day-to-day reality for many Europeans. Families are able to visit relatives across borders once closed to all travel. Detente means Berlin is no longer a flashpoint, edging toward war. Detente means new economic ties and prosperity through trade and investment with the eastern bloc. Above all, detente means a sense of security between nations which share common borders for thousands of miles.

This divergence of opinion is not new - detente has always meant different things to Americans and to Europeans - but we once shared a common aspiration to reduce tensions with the Soviets, and that made detente viable. Now, however, Americans see themselves as betrayed by the invasion of Afghanistan and the presence of the Soviet brigade in Cuba. No longer do we share this aspiration for reduced tension. Now Americans want to confront Moscow.

There is no easy way out of this dilemma. Afghanistan is clearly the key. A Soviet withdrawal is absolutely essential to the future of detente. Chancellor Schmidt has shown that the Soviets are in a talking mood, at least on the subject of theater nuclear forces. Whether they are ready to cut their losses in Afghanistan is entirely another question. I for one believe that the Soviet invasion was a wanton act of aggression deserving a strong response from the West. The Soviets have violated fundamental principles of international law and they must pay dearly for their error.

My views on Afghanistan, I think, are typical of the American electorate. Without a dramatic Soviet concession on the Afghan issue, the future of detente in the U.S. is bleak indeed.

As long as detente is crippled, the call for military preparedness will grow louder and clearer. This is the second matter of dispute in the Alliance. Who will spend the money to prepare the forces to face the Soviets in Europe and the Third World?

With the birth of President Carter's Persian Gulf doctrine a new military priority took form. And with it came the dispute in the Alliance over the military division of labor. Americans are asking why Europe cannot help defend the oil supplies in the Middle East? Given Europe's near total dependence on imported crude oil, why should it be America's exclusive burden to defend the Persian Gulf? These are highly charged issues on the American political landscape.

While that squabble deepens, America presses our NATO allies to assume more responsibility for the defense of Europe. We have insisted on 3% real increases in European defense budgets. We have pressed for the deployment of Pershing II long range missiles and Ground Launched Cruise Missiles and have demanded that Europe share the cost and the command of these weapons.

There are reports that European governments regard Theater Nuclear Force Modernization and the Carter Doctrine as so much sabre-rattling for domestic political purposes in an election year. We on the other hand have been just as obstreperous with accusations that Europe is "finlandizing" itself through reckless concessions to Moscow. Somewhere between Europe's benign and America's malevolent view, there is an accurate assessment of the Soviet threat. Our disagreement on that question complicates the military issue. Europe is clearly reluctant to committ its forces in regions where there is no perceived threat.

A case in point is the Middle East, which is the third point of divergence in the Alliance. In blunt terms the Europeans seek security of their oil supplies through political overtures to the Arab world. The Americans prefer to deploy force as our guarantor of petroleum supplies. These differences of policy carry through to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Europe is more sympathetic to the Arab and to the Palestinian position. America supports Israel and is developing a Rapid Deployment Force to protect our Mideast friends.

This policy difference dates back to the '73 War. Up to now, there have been no grave repercussions for the Alliance. Another Arab-Israeli War, however, might pose serious problems. A clue for the future is Europe's response to the Iranian hostage crisis. When oil supplies and the transatlantic partnership are at odds, Europe, it seems, will opt out for the former.

The question which good minds on both sides of the Atlantic are trying to answer is whether or not the three policy divergences I have sketched here amount to a crisis in the Alliance. There are credible witnesses for both sides of the case.

On one point, however, there is consensus. America's security guarantee in Europe remains credible, viable, and continuing. On this firm foundation, the Alliance rests. There are no indications that Europe will develop an independent nuclear deterrent of its own, at least not in the foreseeable future.

Not too long ago, arms control was also a foundation of the Alliance but regrettably no more. It is now a source of discord because of my

country's and particularly the U.S. Senate's penchant for linking SALT to other foreign policy issues.

This brings me to what I regard as the hidden strengths of the Alliance. Beyond the obvious ties of culture, language, history, and ideology, the Atlantic allies are bound together by an intimate process of learning and growth. Out of our differences and disputes, from our commonalities and consensus there emanates a continuous stream of mutual insights and constructive criticism. Those are fancy words to describe a basic fact - the Alliance is more than a treaty - it is a dialogue.

Allow me to illustrate how this works out in the real world. The United States Senate is obsessed with the Soviets. Our collective response to the near meaningless Soviet brigade in Cuba episode was just as heated as our reaction to Afghanistan. We cannot discriminate, it seems, between real and illusory threats to our security. If the Soviets are involved in a third country, as in Angola, many of my colleagues transform a regional problem into a global cause celebre. This reflexive reaction to the Soviets and to "communism" generally is one of our greatest failings.

Those of us who see the Soviets in more pragmatic terms need political support, and it is in Europe that we find it. You, who live within an hour or two of the Soviet border, have a vast experience with the Russians. You are eminently qualified to judge on Soviet behavior and character. When you say that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a calculated risk to contain a threatening local problem, Americans should listen. I think that your approach to the Soviets, if there is such a thing as a European approach, is more sensible, pragmatic, and effective than our own. Americans must learn from it.

The European outlook on east-west relations is in no small way a

function of your geography and history. Centuries of trade, diplomacy, travel, and war have knit a closer Europe and an intimate awareness of those countries around you. Unlike the United States, the European states live in an international context and know it deeply. You are less prone to use simple labels and less comfortable with political cure-alls and bumper sticker diplomacy.

I can recall not so long ago when America was paralyzed with alarm over the strength of "euro-communism". We actually believed that Europe was going communist in the late 70's. We neither understood what communist parties represent in Europe nor did we appreciate their true electoral capabilities. All we saw was communists. We reacted.

But Europe survived euro-communism. Now France, Germany, Turkey, and Britain are imposing free market solutions as fast as they can find them. Europe is refreshingly pragmatic and irreverent. America would do well to adopt Europe's eclectic approach to politics.

Europe's relationship with the Third World demonstrates that same flexibility. Europe has pursued its interests in the Third World for centuries. Trade and investment have flowed to Asia, Africa, and Latin America where anti-colonial movements, wars of liberation, anti-imperialist rhetoric, and marxist regimes abound. It is not really surprising that your former colonies are now some of your best overseas customers. In fact 25% of EEC exports go to the LDC's. Europe knows the Third World well and is aggressively establishing markets and cornering resources in Africa and Asia.

Europe's booming trade relationship goes hand-in-hand with a generous foreign aid program. Where the American Congress relegates the foreign aid bill to the bottom of the legislative heap, European legislatures see the

practical utility of foreign assistance and support it. The payoff is in productive relationships with the Third World.

Energy is another matter which Europe handles well. High taxation of gasoline, fuel efficient automobiles, and aggressive fuel conservation programs all set Europe ahead of the U.S. where cheap oil lured us into a false sense of energy security. Now that our dependence on mideast oil is nearing your own, we see the logic in your policies and are attempting to apply them to our situation.

The transatlantic learning process goes the other way, as well. I remember reading of the sensation in France caused by the publication of Le Defi Americain(the American Challenge). This book helped convince France that unless she modernized certain key industries, American exports would take over traditional French markets. American business management techniques, computer technology, and various industrial advances have all been borrowed by Europe.

On balance I believe that the strengths of the Alliance will carry us through the difficult period we now face. The sharp policy divergences over detente, the Middle East, and military readiness will not damage the Alliance permanently. Far more serious challenges await NATO in the 1980's, challenges for which there are no easy solutions.

There is no need for a futurologist to tell us what those challenges will be. Every nation in the Alliance is concerned about the possibility of an oil supply disruption in the Middle East. What if Iran were to fall to a Soviet "occupation force"? What if Saudi Arabia's oil fields were destroyed in a mideast war? What contingency plans have we developed?

Is the International Energy Agency equipped to handle such a crisis?

The answer is no.

How will the Alliance respond to unrest in Eastern Europe? Oil shortages in the Soviet Union may cause a cutback in subsidies for Eastern Europe. Current economic distress might be intensified and civil disorder ensue. Would a Soviet repeat of Hungary in '56 or Czechoslovakia in '68 merit the same restraint from NATO?

What would be the NATO response to a Sino-Soviet conflict? With the current U.S. alignment toward China and Europe's close ties with the Soviet Union, could the Alliance respond in a unified way to such a war?

And what of the growing indebtedness of the LDC's? Many will face certain bankruptcy in the 1980's and many are close friends of the West. Can the Alliance address this problem? Can the international monetary institutions respond? The North-South Dialogue may turn into a bitter tirade. OPEC cannot be allowed to sit it out, safe on the sidelines, after their pricing policies have precipitated the crisis.

Instability in the Third World is almost guaranteed in the 1980's. The Soviet-American rivalry will surely elevate local conflicts into super-power confrontations. What role is the Alliance to play? Will NATO define a larger area of the world in which its special interests are at stake? Or will we continue with our ad hoc arrangements such as were set in motion for Zaire in 1978?

Finally there is the relationship with the Soviets. Many prominent Europeans believe that current U.S. policy trends are provocative and dangerous. Under a new administration, more than likely Ronald Reagan's,

American foreign policy may take on an even more belligerent tone and substance. The threat to the fragile remnants of detente and arms control would be extreme. The danger of a limited conventional war would be enhanced, the probability of a nuclear exchange increased. These are solemn, grim scenarios. I look to our NATO allies to help keep them at bay.

My own feeling is that the Alliance is capable of meeting the challenges of the 1980's. The combination of American power and European realism is a potent partnership. As the Alliance reaches a consensus on the divisions which now disturb it, I believe that NATO will be well prepared for the new problems of the 80's.

The key to success will be those intangible byproducts of the transatlantic relationship. America will, I believe, learn from Europe the pragmatic subtleties of international relations which elude us now. We will reduce our strident anti-communism, we will recognize the rich economic opportunity in the Third World, we will return to the arms control path to national security, we will develop more effective energy policies, and we will finally come to grips with the reality of Soviet power.