

Insight and Outlook . . . By Joseph Kraft

Alliance in Crisis-I *P. Stahala*

PARIS — The so-called NATO crisis initiated by Gen. Charles de Gaulle is actually a long-playing, many-sided diplomatic discussion that is likely to end up in the direct line of succession to the great settlements made in 1815 at the Congress of Vienna and in 1919 at the peace conference of Versailles.



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The central issue will be the future of divided Germany. Equally involved will be relations among the Germans and the states of Eastern and Western Europe, including Britain. Also at stake will be the ties among all these countries and the two extra-European giants called in by World War II to settle the fate of Europe — the Soviet Union and the United States.

Because so many different important issues and countries are implicated, I will be devoting this and two more columns to the NATO crisis. In subsequent articles I will try to de-

scribe, first the French outlook and its prospects, and then the right stance for the United States to take in safeguarding its interests and those of the Allies against a dangerous challenge. But I want now to indicate why so many things in so many different countries have come up for grabs all at once.

THE BASIC REASON is that World War II ended, not in a diplomatic settlement, but in a balance of military forces. The military balance, after deepening in the sharp challenges of the cold war, has now become accepted to the point where relaxation is in vogue and it is possible to envision translation of the power realities into a diplomatic settlement. For virtually all nations concerned, in fact, the provisional has already lasted too long.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in Germany — both East and West. The two halves have regained economic strength and developed a growing commerce abroad. While still inhibited by the hangover from the Nazi era, both are trying to translate economic strength into political and diplomatic power — hence the recent efforts of the East Germans to acquire observer status at the United Nations and diplomatic recognition in the Middle East; and thus, too the repeated efforts of the Bonn regime to stand on a footing of equality with the other Western countries.

At the same time, both Germanys have undertaken certain small steps (the so-called *kleine Schritte*) to bridge the gulf that divides them. The day when sentiment for reunification asserts itself strongly cannot be far off — perhaps no farther than the life span of the present East German, boss Walter Ulbricht.

Dramatic changes have also taken place in Eastern Europe and the Soviet

Union. The Soviet leaders have learned how to make their system work without iron-clad monolithic compulsion. The East Europeans, while maintaining close ties with Moscow, have acquired increasing scope for national communism.

Since both the East European and the Soviet regimes are concerned primarily with internal development, they have at least a temporary interest in the growing trade with the West, and in a peaceful climate. And, even though all the European Communists play in the "German menace" to embarrass the West and rally their own supporters, it is not unthinkable that under certain conditions they could accept a general European settlement.

THE WEST Europeans are aching to make a try. They have prospered greatly in the postwar years and they no longer feel the imminence of a military threat. While it is only de Gaulle in France who actively seeks a general settlement with Moscow, most of the other members of the

Atlantic alliance accept much of his argument.

The argument has a special appeal for those, largely Protestant, nations filled with bitter memories of German aggressions and imbued with a faith in collective security. Though they support the Atlantic alliance faithfully, they see nothing wrong in an arrangement with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe that would hold the Germans in check. Included in this group are Britain, especially under Labor; Norway; Denmark; Iceland; Canada and to a certain extent, Holland.

A second, partially overlapping group in the alliance is, in one way or another, in hostage to France. Portugal wants French support for its African policies. Canada and Belgium have large French-speaking populations to conciliate. Turkey and especially Greece would like French support on Cyprus.