

French Foreign Policy Disappoints the Allies

Paris Stuns Democracy Conference

Compiled by Our Staff From Dispatches

WARSAW — France stunned a U.S.-sponsored conference of world democracies Tuesday by refusing to sign a declaration backing human rights and government based on free and fair elections.

French diplomats said they differed with the United States over how best to promote democracy and feared that such ad-hoc gatherings as the Warsaw conference would water down the authority of the United Nations.

"Creating the right conditions for encouraging the growth of democracy is complex," a French statement said. "This is not a matter which allows sweeping generalizations."

The dispute was largely philosophical, and centered on French doubts that the conference could prod nondemocratic nations to adopt democracy — a policy that usually backfires, Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine of France said Monday.

Despite France's decision not to join the club, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said that the conference had succeeded in its goal of creating a "community of democracies" that breached cultural, historical and linguistic differences.

"We are a community, because we each believe that democracy is a fundamental and universal human right, because we want our own citizens to enjoy this right, and because we are committed to helping others strengthen and sustain it," Mrs. Albright said.

The United States and Poland, which conceived the conference, want the Warsaw declaration on democracy to have the same force as the 1975 Helsinki Accords setting international standards on human rights.

France's refusal to endorse the declaration raised questions about the role it would take in this concerted global effort to foster fragile new democracies and strengthen old ones.

Yet other nations here dismissed the importance of the French move, saying it did not weaken the document, but, ironically, merely excluded France from the process. "The move confirms the most powerful force of democracy, that everyone can have his own opinion," said the Polish Foreign Ministry spokesman, Pawel Dobrowolski.

France said it did not back the document because it amounted "to a diplomatic pledge for the democratic states to act as a group." In particular, France objected to a general agreement at the conference to convene a caucus of democratic states, possibly at the next meeting of the UN General Assembly in the fall.

The French refusal to go along with the declaration was a surprise, since the declaration had been circulated for comment among participants for several weeks. (Reuters, AP)

■ Vedrine Explains French View

Jane Perlez of The New York Times reported from Warsaw:

Foreign Minister Vedrine of France cited Fidel Castro and Saddam Hussein

Chirac Offers Just a Sketch Of New Europe

By John Vinocur
International Herald Tribune

PARIS — President Jacques Chirac of France offered a limited, middle-term vision of Europe's future to the German Bundestag on Tuesday, holding out the prospect of a European constitution someday, but proposing no blueprint of a final model of government and sovereignty for the European Union.

In a speech in Berlin that was meant to set down the French position on Europe's institutional future, Mr. Chirac offered instead a plan that traced the middle ground while carefully avoiding a delineated concept for the horizon.

There was no mention of a future pan-European government or a European president-to-be or a European Parliament assembled by direct vote. In this sense, Mr. Chirac's outline fell well short of the reach of the proposal last month of Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer of Germany, who envisaged a European Union with a functioning government on a federalist model in the next decade.

With a presidential election in 2002 in which the central issue is likely to be who best defends the interests of France, Mr. Chirac surely saw no gain at this moment in defining how he feels sovereignty should be parceled out in an enlarged, changing Europe.

If, as the French president said, "the face of the future of Europe is still to be drawn," Mr. Chirac kept far away from penciling in clearly recognizable features. In political terms, he chose the comfort of staying noncontroversial in terms of his domestic electorate, turning away from the attraction of proposing a French vision for Europe that would have rivaled that of Germany.

This left France in the ironic position of having a president and government that see themselves as the European Union's most independent and capable political forces, but that, because of short-term political calculation, shy away from an essential yes or no in the debate on European federalism. If Germany has been counted, France is doing its best, for now, to abstain.

In this sense, Mr. Chirac's speech gives the appearance of being a response to Mr. Fischer's federalist call, but it is minus French agreement with the German position or French substance to counter it. Above all, the approach is that of a holding operation designed to last until after the French presidential election. Then, Europe's ultimate future can be confronted more directly in France.

Addressing Germany, Mr. Chirac went to the safe ground of saying that neither country wanted a European superstate that would substitute for nation states. It was also clear, he said, that Europe would continue (and possibly enlarge) its exercise of some elements of sovereignty. Yet there were no specifics.

See FRANCE, Page 4

See CHIRAC, Page 4

CHIRAC: *French Vision of Europe Is Sketched for the Bundestag*

Continued from Page 1

Rather, Mr. Chirac concentrated on organizational touches, as opposed to an overarching approach of the kind Mr. Fischer employed to launch what has become a Europe-wide debate. In this fashion, he said it was important to clarify who had which competence among the different levels of the European system.

But there was no direct suggestion of vast changes, such as the coming of a European president or a European government. The closest Mr. Chirac edged to pointing in this direction was in a reference, without elaboration, to "necessary institutional adjustments, on both the executive and parliamentary sides, to reinforce the effectiveness and democratic control of the Union."

This was obviously necessary because Mr. Chirac said the EU's construction had been too much the business of Europe's elites and political classes.

The French president's middle-term thoughts went to what he called "three great building sites" in a period of "great transition."

The first was the community's enlargement into Eastern Europe, a process that he indicated would go forward at a rhythm that could not possibly be set by decree.

The second was setting up a hard core of community countries — Mr. Chirac called them a "pioneer group" — that would move forward at an accelerated pace of "reinforced cooperation" on such matters as economic coordination, defense and security policy and fighting crime. An old notion, with considerable support in France, the pioneer group in a two-speed Europe would have its own secretariat and be open to any country that wants in, Mr. Chirac said.

This proposal, which follows on Mr. Fischer's similar line, has drawn criticism from community countries that fear second-class membership within the EU and from critics who regard the step as certain to make European power appear even more diffuse in the minds of markets and investors.

Mr. Chirac's third area of concentration would be a phase beginning next year during which the EU would try to more clearly define its different levels of competence, its final geographic frontiers, a charter of fundamental human rights and "necessary adjustments" relating to the EU executive and Parliament.

It was presumably during this period, according to the French view, that more of Europe's face-to-be would become visible.

All this would take several years, a period at the end of which, Mr. Chirac said, "the governments, then the peoples, would be called to have their say on a text that we could consider as the first European constitution."

Not an additional word went to that prospect.

Mr. Chirac reserved most of his passion for a few rhetorical flourishes in the manner of Charles de Gaulle that accompanied his pleasure, noted in his speech, at being the first foreign chief of state to address the Bundestag from its new chambers in Berlin's old Reichstag.

"Unified Germany! Germany back home!" Mr. Chirac exclaimed in the telegraphic Gaullian manner.

As for France's currently no-more-than-workaday relations with Germany, Mr. Chirac found another occasion to let exhortatory enthusiasm fly — in contrast to his narrow caution in detailing the future of Europe's coming together. Only France and Germany could manage the acts that will lead Europe further, he said.

"Let's return to the first breath of our founding momentum!" Mr. Chirac said. "The ardent necessity of our dialogue! Let's create places to undertake things together and get to know each other!"

X *let. Her. 6 28/6*



Czarek Sokolowski/The Associated Press

Mr. Vedrine, who said democracy was always a process of evolution.

FRANCE: *Stunner at Meeting*

Continued from Page 1

as examples of authoritarian leaders who had only been reinforced either by military force or economic sanctions.

Further, he contended, while President Jimmy Carter clearly did not intend to bring about the Islamic revolution in Iran, his policies had essentially helped bring about that result.

Morton Halperin, chief of policy planning at the State Department, parried Mr. Vedrine's statements, saying the Warsaw conference was not about the "export" of democracy but about enabling countries that had "chosen" democracy to help one another.

Mr. Vedrine spoke to the gathering in the chamber of the Polish Parliament after opening remarks by the host, Foreign Minister Bronislaw Geremek. Mr. Vedrine then went out of his way to brief American reporters on his thoughts about democracy and how his philosophy on democracy differed from what he saw as the themes for the conference.

He was careful not to attack the particulars of the conference, saying he had had nothing to do with its organization and had come at the express request of Mr. Geremek, his friend. He did not mention Mrs. Albright, whose was the power behind the conference and who is seeking to make the theme of democracy the lodestar of her tenure.

Instead of lending itself to easy converts, Mr. Vedrine said, democracy is "always a process of evolution." And, he said, it overwhelmingly involves long maturing internal processes within nations like economics, the collective state of mind and — in the end — politics.

Definitions aside, the French foreign minister seemed vexed about the appearance that developed democracies were lecturing others. Nobody, he suggested, has a magic formula for "transforming Russia into a huge Finland, or China into a huge South Korea."

"Let's not be self-congratulatory," Mr. Vedrine added. "Our democracies still have room for improvement." He singled out the role of money in influencing policy in developed democracies as "terrifying" and bemoaned the apathy of citizens.

Representatives of more than 100 countries attended the meeting. </