
F.S. Manor

NATO in Disarray

*Cyprus is divided, Brussels is on strike, and the Austrians joke
—while the Soviet military buildup is the most threatening ever.*

The itinerary of my winter journey was entirely fortuitous. Yet the three pieces of the mosaic—Cyprus, Brussels, and Vienna—produced a remarkably coherent picture, one of Western ingenuity and enterprise, threatened by an equal dose of Western pusillanimity and an obstinate refusal to face harsh realities. Having spent a good part of the Second World War forever worrying about the efficacy of black-out, I find an almost childish pleasure in the dazzling illumination and the brightly lit, richly stocked shop-windows of the festive season. This Christmas, however, as I strolled amidst the well-dressed throng of Brussels and Vienna, watching passers-by laden with parcels, peering into stores crowded with customers, but above all savoring the gay lights that dispelled the early December darkness, I could never suppress the thought nagging at the back of my mind: How much longer?

An utter obliviousness to present realities informed the spirit wherever I went: Under the swaying palm-trees of beautiful Cyprus, where the Greeks still believe they will go back to the areas now firmly held by the Turks; in Brussels where—as in the Vienna of 1918—the situation is considered hopeless but not desperate; and in Vienna itself where the Austrians are trying to convince themselves their neutrality will save them from whatever cataclysm may engulf their neighbors.

Cyprus: The Scorpion and the Turtle

On a tree-lined avenue of Nicosia the thick walls of the Moorish-style building surrounded by delightful gardens spoke of a time long before air-conditioning had been invented. The punkah that monotonously whirled on the ceiling to cool the 80-degree heat of Nicosia's December was witness to the British legacy: The punkahs that once revolved from the countless ceilings between the Mediterranean and Hong Kong were as British as Yorkshire pudding. Young men impeccably dressed, except for the minatory bulge in their jackets, lounged by the various entrances while elderly messengers shuffled forever with cups of sweet Turkish coffee, this a legacy of three centuries of Turkish dominance.

The Greek-Cypriot cabinet minister, who, preparing for a vital international conference for which he was leaving that very evening, yet found time to spare an hour to a newsman from the Canadian Prairies, was remarkably realistic about his neighbors. He did not foresee an early end to the Lebanese tragedy—and the latest reports of sporadic fighting in Lebanon bear out the minister's accurate assessment. He was equally pessimistic about the prospects of an Arab-Israeli settlement, his views sharply at variance with the anodyne pap on the Middle East fed to the public by the departing President Ford.

But when it came to the future of Cyprus the minister's clear vision became clouded. He believed in a united Cyprus in which the Greeks would be allowed to move freely across the zonal boundary, a line that in Nicosia is as ugly and depressing as that which divides Berlin. It still lacks the vicious East German dogs,

but my long experience of human folly leads me to believe that this is only a question of time. The minister argued that the central government of Archbishop Makarios must be sufficiently strong to hold the island state together. And when I hesitantly pointed out that such dreams were unlikely to be realized, the minister said he had to maintain "positive optimism." Otherwise he really could not be in the job.

The same illusions cloud the vision of the Canadians, who for 12 years have been supplying substantial forces in the futile attempt to "keep peace" on this peaceless island, once dedicated to Aphrodite, the goddess of love. It is depressing to watch these smartly turned-out soldiers, the best troops in NATO, wasted on ludicrous duties where they forever argue with the two sides about a new piece of concrete wall, a new platform on an Observation Post that makes the Turkish OP three feet higher than the opposite Greek post or vice versa. They plead, they cajole, they argue, and when they cannot persuade one or the other side, they file a grievance with the United Nations in New York. It would be funny if it were not for the backdrop of all those Soviet tanks and ground forces poised along the Central Front of Europe, where a well-trained Western company may mean the difference between those gay Christmas lights and a new devastation.

Meanwhile, the spirit of free enterprise that built our civilization, indeed the Greek spirit that had inspired Western thought processes, is as alive as ever. The truncated Greek part of the island is humming with activity. Hotels had been lost in the part seized by the Turks, but new hotels are rising in the Greek sector, and if the British tourists no longer come because they have become poor, perhaps the Scandinavians will come, or the Germans, or the French. This faith in economic future, in the ability to master all adversity whatever the odds, differs sharply from the Western refusal to protect the fruits of these labors, to defend the freedoms each of us cherishes. Indeed, it would seem as if we were two different civilizations, one full of ingenuity, the other dying on its feet.

The same paralysis of will that makes the British and the Dutch slash their defense budgets in the face of the biggest offensive build-up ever by the Soviet Union, obscures the vision of the Greeks and the Turks, both threatened by the self-same build-up, both refusing to forget their petty quarrels in the face of a far more deadly peril. The Turkish foreign minister who attended the NATO meeting in Brussels called a press conference to warn the Western public about the possibility that his government might effect a reversal of alliances and make friends with the Soviet bloc, as Helsinki encourages everyone to do. ("Helsinki" has ceased to be a geographical term and now covers a vast multitude of sins.)

The southern flank of NATO is thus in complete disarray. A senior naval officer in Brussels suggested we might have to "amputate" Cyprus to save the alliance in the Mediterranean. He "tilted" towards the Turks, and indeed all military estimates indicate that in a conflict the Turkish forces would go through the Greek lines like knife through butter. But why a conflict? Why not a settlement? It is the old Israeli story about the turtle and the scorpion all over again.

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The scorpion asked the turtle to carry it across the Suez Canal. "No," the turtle refused, "you are too dangerous. You would sting me." "Don't be silly," the scorpion reassured the turtle. "You know I cannot swim and if I sting you we'll both drown." So the turtle carried the scorpion on its back and in the middle of the Canal it stung the turtle. "Why did you do it?" the turtle asked in agony. "Now we'll both die." "This," answered the dying scorpion, "is the Middle East." The Middle East of Beirut and Cairo, of Nicosia and Ankara.

Brussels: Pants at Half-Mast

In Brussels, as in Canada, the air-traffic controllers were on strike and our Boeing circled the airport for an hour, consuming precious fuel for which we give the Arabs our hard-earned substance plus our weapons that in due course they will use against the West. The Canadian air-traffic controllers had objected to the use of French in air traffic control, and one wondered whether the Brussels controllers objected to Flemish.

At NATO headquarters near the airport the pickets were out. The civilian personnel of the alliance was on strike, placards and all. I watched an Italian Communist reporter I know, the Brussels correspondent of *l'Unità* of Rome, together with her colleagues from *Pravda*, Tass, and—a new appearance this at the NATO meeting—a group of Bulgarian "accredited correspondents," interview the pickets and carefully copy in their notebooks the text of the slogans on the placards. The Bulgarians' cameras clicked and whirled—Warsaw Pact meetings were never like this.

It was a perfect reflection of the state of the alliance. The enemy is at the gates and the very heart of NATO is paralyzed by a quarrel over a cost-of-living bonus, with Communist correspondents on hand to report it all.

I have now attended the NATO ministerial meetings for more than a decade and I believe this was one of the gloomiest sessions I have ever witnessed. The ministers were given figures, shown pictures and graphs illustrating the massive gap between the forces of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. And at the end of the week they duly dispersed without taking any decision, having come to the comfortable conclusion that the Russians are not ten feet tall—as if even pygmy Russians could not race those tanks to the Channel and press buttons on all their wonder missiles. Back at home it is defense-budget-cutting-time as usual, something that is about as logical as cancelling, as an economy measure, a fire insurance policy while the neighbor's house is burning.

Western superiority in quality is going fast, if it has not already gone, substantially helped by Western exports of sophisticated technology and large cheap credits given to the Soviet Union, something everybody in Brussels deplored, but the British had hardly finished their deploring when they turned on the United States to castigate the Pentagon for interfering with an export contract that would greatly improve the performance of Soviet missiles.

NATO lacks ground forces, tanks, and planes; but, first and foremost, the alliance lacks time and space, two vital ingredients without which deterrence is an illusion. Once, it was thought, a political crisis would be accompanied by a Soviet build-up that could be observed by satellites and give NATO time to take counter-measures. But NATO no longer has such time, because the Soviet forces massed at the West German border are so fully integrated, equipped, and supported that they can advance immediately. And NATO lacks space because Western anti-tank weapons could not stop the overwhelming mass of Soviet tanks once they got moving.

The Russians have their entire infrastructure at the border and they can move any time without mobilizing reserves or bringing up

reinforcements first. "They have it all already on the ground," I was told repeatedly, "and they are right at our throat."

"At present the danger is we shall be jumped at unprepared," a British general told me. "And a jump from peace to war would catch the alliance with pants half down."

Pants seemed to figure almost as much in the discussions as did the estimated height of the average Russian. A NATO defense minister mused on what may be happening. "We must consider that if they think we are soft enough," he said, "and they believe in their system, they may intend to use their new military capability. You cannot be sanguine about that." He then complained about the ministers sitting in closed meetings and being briefed while the public remains unaware of what is happening.

"You have to have public awareness of this to get the political support that is necessary to do the things that are essential," the minister said. So I asked him whether, as an experienced politician, he planned to enlighten the public. "If you mean that I shall go up and down the country scaring the pants off people, no I shall do nothing of the kind," he replied. Why not? In the present climate, manufactured by our all-powerful media, he would have "to sound like a redneck," he admitted ruefully. What he did not say was that this would end his political career.

The tragedy—or perhaps the criminal negligence—is that so many people are perfectly aware of what is going on, but are afraid to say so aloud, or if they say so are howled down by a chorus of media "persons" yapping in unison: "cold-warrior! warmonger!"

A French officer attached to NATO, one who obviously does not share the go-it-alone ideas of his political bosses, said the Soviet preponderance in tanks was "a frightening prospect." He dismissed as wishful thinking reports that the Soviet aircraft captured in Japan was second-rate. It was a fine aircraft, and the Russians are continuously improving their weapons on a scale the West cannot match.

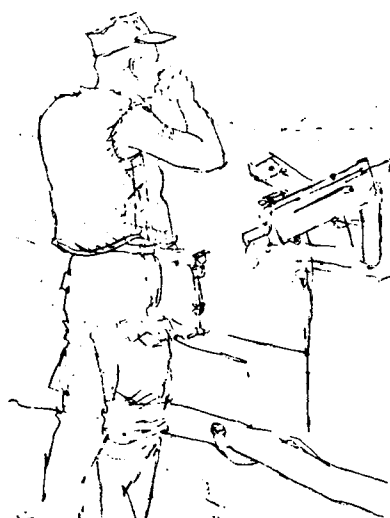
Our "flexible response" strategy is yet another instance of wishful thinking. In Western liturgy, "graduated response" means that if the superior Soviet conventional forces overrun NATO defenses, NATO will reply with its little tactical nukes and go on to slightly bigger nukes and so on. The Soviets have never accepted this premise. They say the moment nuclear weapons are used,

whatever their size, they will let go with everything in their arsenal. There is, moreover, a new facet to Soviet tactics: The Russians are now fully trained for chemical warfare.

In a recent exercise Soviet forces contaminated an area in East Germany with modern chemicals, then went through it simulating an attack on NATO's rear, and after a successful completion of the exercise decontaminated the region making it safe for occupation. The Soviet units were fully equipped and trained for chemical warfare. They must have been training somewhere beyond the Urals before bringing their new chemical toys to Germany to try them out on what would closely approximate the future battleground. But we must keep this quiet. No use scaring the pants off people.

We have detente. And SALT II. And the Mutual Balanced Force Reduction talks or MBFRs. (The 'B,' however, is silent and must never be pronounced.) The NATO defense ministers were told in Brussels by their military advisers that none of these talks will affect the military balance or lead to a change in the three-to-one Soviet superiority in conventional forces. But like the proverbial show, the talks must go on.

The new Canadian minister of external affairs, Don Jamieson, was typical of the "face-the-wall-my-darling" attitude that prevailed among the foreign ministers. (The defense ministers have more guts, but they wield less influence and have no money.) Mr. Jamieson waffled as much as his external affairs department



top advisers, who insisted that the Soviet preponderance was "perfectly manageable." These were Mr. Jamieson's enlightening comments: "If I have an overall impression from this meeting, it is that the Kissinger approach is the one that commends itself to me, because there is always in this kind of discussions the problem of assessing Soviet strength and saying the only alternative is to match it, in which case we would be in a horrendous arms race, whereas Mr. Kissinger was saying you have to couple a realistic appraisal with again renewed effort at disarmament and finding some kind of understanding that does not lead to a scandalous waste of resources."

Perfect, is it not? On the authority of the world's Number One Guru we don't have to do anything. All we need is another realistic appraisal and then let us offer the Russians yet another round of negotiations. The talks can go on while the Russians complete their build-up, if there is anything more to complete, that is. Meanwhile, we shall worry about indexed unemployment benefits and forget the "horrendous waste."

MBFR: Much Better for the Russians

To see how we are getting along with finding that "some kind of understanding" I flew to Vienna to learn more about MBFRs. At NATO the initials (interpreted by some as "much better for the Russians") still stand, but in the Russian language "balanced" is a four-letter word very much *infra dig*. A Western diplomat's wife, who sent a note to the Soviet ambassador thanking him for one of those parties with which the diplomats ease the tedium of their inaction, received the note back unopened. She had committed the unforgivable *faux pas* of addressing the note to "the Soviet ambassador to MBFRs"—and it was rejected like an impertinent diplomatic protest.

A few days after my arrival in Vienna, yet another round of talks was completed and the negotiations adjourned for the Christmas/Grandfather Frost holidays. We could have an agreement tomorrow, a diplomat told me, if we accepted the Soviet proposals. These are endearingly simple: An acknowledgement by NATO of permanent Soviet preponderance in Europe further tilted in Soviet favor by new drastic restrictions on West German forces; and a pledge by NATO not to enlarge the alliance, such as by bringing in Spain. Not a word in the Soviet proposals about NATO's demand that the Russians withdraw one army of 68,000 men and 17,000 tanks behind the Soviet border. This is not much to ask since "disparity in ground manpower in the area (i.e. Central Front) is somewhat larger than 150,000 men."

This estimate is taken from the communiqué issued by the Western allies on the occasion of the Christmas recess. There is another interesting sentence in the communiqué: "...it is apparent that the military significance of what the West is offering is at least as great as the military significance of what it is asking from the East." Note, not of what the East is offering; the East does not offer anything. Nonetheless, the communiqué ends on a brave note: "As regards prospect for progress in coming rounds, we are not pessimistic." The foreign ministers will be glad to hear it. They know that "we must develop a more realistic understanding of detente, and the task of public education falls on the Western governments themselves."

Before the Sack

I wound up my Vienna talks listening to Austrian politicians and officials, who after all are right in the middle of the row, desperately trying to keep out of it.

The Austrians still tell jokes. Which is the world's most neutral country? Czechoslovakia, of course. They don't interfere even in their own affairs.

Otherwise, the Austrians reminded me of that Greek-Cypriot minister. They were all eminently clear-sighted about the coming dangers, but they felt they had to maintain a "positive optimism." If things become really bad, a well-informed official told me—and he fully expected the East-West conflict to become much worse—Austria will have to abandon her present active role in international affairs and withdraw completely into her shell.

But will she be allowed to do so? An allied officer with much field experience demonstrated on his map how any Soviet advance into Yugoslavia would cut right across Austria.

I hasten to add that the officer was not an American. In fact, a very senior American officer shared the Austrian optimism and believed that (a) the Russians would stay out of post-Tito Yugoslavia whatever the temptation; and (b) that should they, contrary to expectations, succumb to temptation, they would scrupulously respect Austrian neutrality. The American was a naval man. Perhaps, in view of the growth of the Soviet naval might, he too has to maintain "positive optimism."

Yugoslavia, Eurocommunism, an enormous increase in Soviet weapons research expenditure, and five Soviet armies with reserves and back-up forces at our throat: This is the message for 1977. But in Europe the city lights were bright, the peoples' countenances happy, business brisk. It probably was the same in Rome just before Genseric sacked the city. □



Joseph P. Duggan

Some Things Considered

*Does "public radio"—financed by the taxpayers—
represent the citizenry's views?*

"If they [National Public Radio] existed only for 'All Things Considered,' that would justify their existence," declared a former educational broadcaster who now teaches at a Midwestern state university. "If you just listened to 'All Things Considered' for an hour every day, you wouldn't have to read anything."

"Almost to the day they went on the air with 'All Things Considered,' they didn't know what they were going to do," continued the professor. "They were very exciting, very experimental. I remember one piece they did in those early days on animal overpopulation. The reporter went down to the animal shelter to be on hand when they put a dog to sleep. He explained what was about to take place and then turned the microphone over to the dog just before they gave him the injection. You could hear the dog breathing, and then there was silence. It was the most moving thing I've ever heard on radio."

"All Thing Considered," or ATC to initiate, is the 90-minute daily "newsmagazine" broadcast, produced and distributed by National Public Radio (NPR), America's only federally-funded radio network. Each night ATC presents a summary of the day's news, then a pastiche of "in-depth" stories "behind the headlines," off-beat features, and commentaries.

There is a decided pop-leftist tilt to ATC's coverage, and a tone that curiously blends countercultural cheekiness and liberal piety—both engendered, I believe, by ATC's heroic self-image as the noncommercial David armed with spunk and a prayer against a mighty detachment of commercial media Goliaths, Titans, and Cyclopes. "It's been a big week for dope fans," wisecracked co-host Bob Edwards one evening in December as he introduced a pair of reports on drug-related events—one covering the convention of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML), where "gonzo journalist" Hunter Thompson sang dithyrambs to the weed and Jimmy Carter's aide Peter Bourne predicted its swift decriminalization; the other recording a judge's ruling in Boston that cocaine constitutes "an acceptable recreational drug." On the same broadcast, legal affairs correspondent Nina Totenberg began her report on the Supreme Court's decision against mandatory pregnancy pay with the shopworn feminist refrain: "Women lost another round with the Supreme Court today...."

When *New Times* and other media trendies whiffed a big-business conspiracy in the 1975 death of plutonium worker Karen Silkwood, ATC's Barbara Newman took after the story as a kind of Holy Grail, ardently filing dispatch after dispatch in her relentless but largely fruitless investigation. Robert Krulwich, NPR's news editor, caught the Woodstein bug in '74 when he took time off from law school to cover the Washington beat for New York's radical WBAI-FM and found himself cast in the spotlight of the impeachment hearings. He did a stint with the Washington bureau of *Rolling Stone* before finding his niche at NPR. And Susan

Stamberg, the program's co-host, is styled by peers and self as a feminist champion, a lioness among men. When Barbara Walters became the first of the gentler sex to host a television network news broadcast, NPR served notification with full-page ads in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*—at taxpayer expense—that Susan Stamberg had been the first female host for *any* network news program.

Since its inception in 1971, ATC has gained such coveted prizes as the DuPont-Columbia University Award for Excellence in Journalism (1975) and the Peabody Radio and Television Award (1972). In the citation for the latter award, ATC was praised for "a unique and analytical examination of the day's news and important issues through exhaustive investigative reporting."

An investigation of ATC's newsgathering techniques, however, reveals that much of its "investigative reporting" derives from interviews *not* with newsmaking sources—that is, the figures directly involved in the newsworthy event—but from beat reporters for other news agencies. When Jimmy Carter announces three cabinet appointments, for example, ATC's Susan Stamberg seeks an interview not with one of the appointees, not with a member of Congress or a spokesman for Carter, but instead with Thomas Ottenad, White House correspondent for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. Or when defense policy makes the news, Stamberg may call upon *Washington Post* editorial writer Stephen Rosenfeld; or in domestic affairs, Harry Ellis of the *Christian Science Monitor*.

Now while a dialogue with Mr. Ellis or Mr. Rosenfeld or Mr. Ottenad might indeed be informative, I should hardly call it "investigative reporting" on ATC's part. Moreover I would question the clubbish elitism of Washington-establishment reporter-as-reporter interviewing Washington-establishment reporter-as-authoritative-source-and-celebrity. Is there not an implication in this, after all, that the roles are interchangeable? And how can fact and opinion be distinguished when a Thomas Ottenad or a Harry Ellis straddles one foot on his newspaper's pedestal of objectivity and the other on the soapbox of the opinionated pundit-as-newsmaker?

Take another instance of ATC's approach to "investigative" coverage: When the Chilean government announced in November a mass amnesty for political prisoners, ATC delved behind the headlines not by inquiries to the Chilean government or spokesmen for Chilean dissidents, or, say, a recognized monitoring body such as Freedom House or Amnesty International. Instead Susan Stamberg placed a telephone call to the Santiago correspondent for United Press International. Or when senior members of Indira Gandhi's party broke ranks in early February, Stamberg got on the horn to UPI's man in New Delhi. Stamberg frequently carries on two-way dialogues with other UPI reporters—among them White House correspondent Helen Thomas—and the extent of Stamberg's investigative probing is usually to doubt the information related by a governmental or other "official" source and ask the reporter-interlocutor's opinion: "But what do you *really* think...?" Again, no doubt that UPI's correspondents are acute and well-informed observers. But should they risk their agency's hard-earned reputation for "utter impartiality" by submitting to a line of questioning that mixes fact and opinion? And would these

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