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Prime Minister

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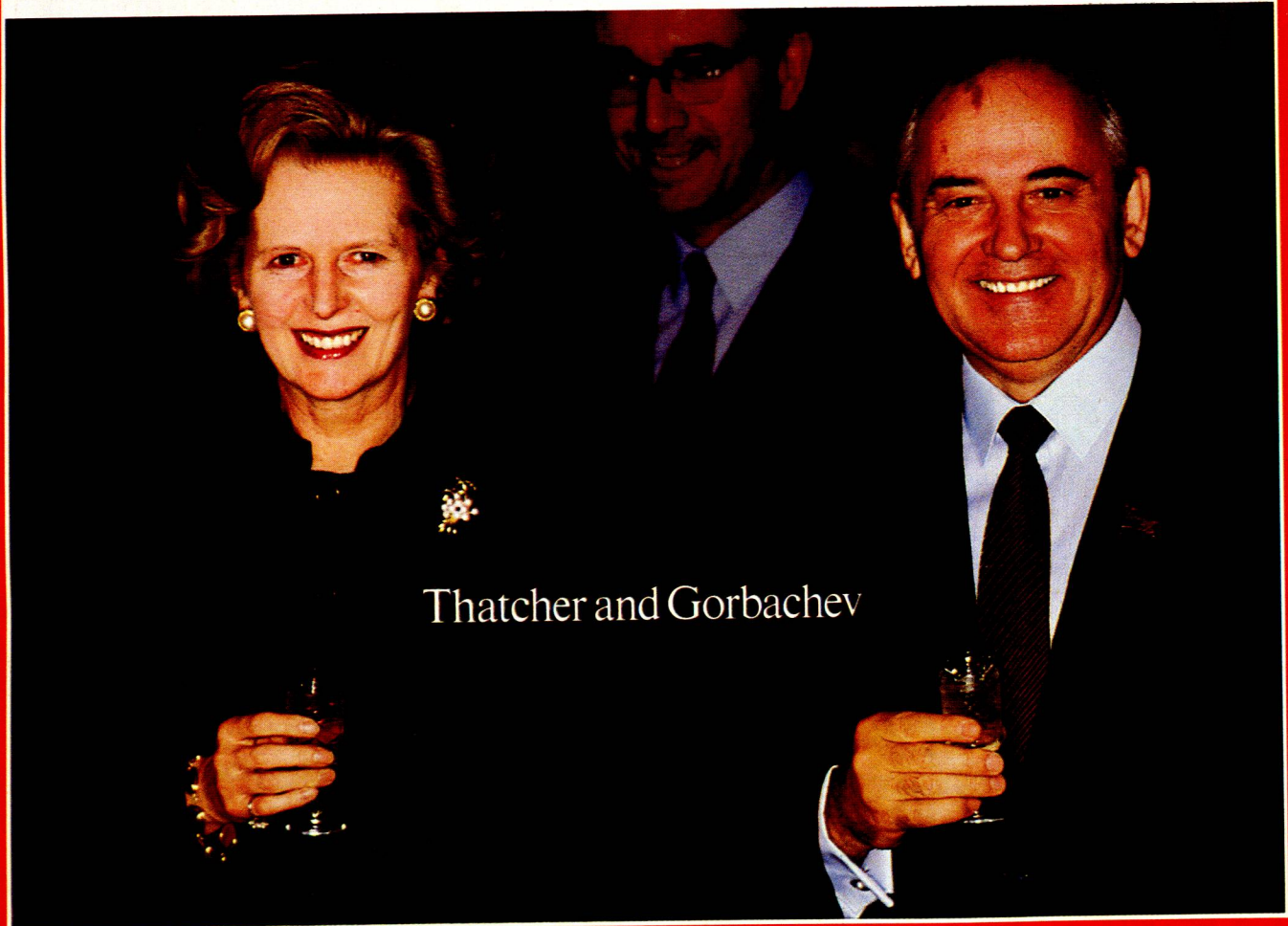
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TIME

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Maggie in Moscow

“I would implicitly accept his word”



Thatcher and Gorbachev

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COVER STORY

Maggie in Moscow

Extraordinary chemistry as Western Europe debates defense



"The most fascinating and invigorating visit I have made as Prime Minister": an exhilarated Margaret Thatcher at a housing project in a Moscow suburb

On board her Royal Air Force VC-10 en route to Moscow, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had relished the prospect of matching wits once again with Soviet Leader Mikhail Gorbachev, whom she had last seen in London two years ago. "We don't do diplomatic niceties," she explained. "We get right down to the nitty-gritty."

That was precisely what the Prime Minister and Gorbachev did in Moscow in the course of a five-day state visit by Thatcher last week that provided a spectacular example of the changing nature of East-West relations. Thatcher lunched with Andrei Sakharov, symbol of the human-rights struggle in the Soviet Union, who told her that "two years ago, you could not imagine sitting around a lunch like this." She had breakfast with Iosif Be-

gun, a Jewish refusenik freed from prison only last February. What Gorbachev calls *glasnost*, or openness, was put on astonishing display during a 50-minute televised Thatcher press conference with Soviet journalists, broadcast to a Soviet public that must have been surprised by much of what it heard from her.

Afterward, Thatcher called her journey to Moscow "the most fascinating and invigorating visit I have made as Prime Minister." For a total of 13 hours, according to official count, Thatcher and Gorbachev talked: they argued, grew excited, interrupted each other. Debating arms control over smoked sturgeon during intermission, they delayed the second act of a performance of *Swan Lake* at the Bolshoi Theater for 20 minutes. The next day Thatcher arrived two hours late, barely in

time for dessert, at a British embassy lunch for Soviet intellectuals because she had not wanted to cut short a conversation with Gorbachev. At a Kremlin banquet, the two leaders ignored other guests for two hours. Said a British official: "I cannot say they did not raise their voices, but they both like having a good argument." A Thatcher aide remarked that "the chemistry was quite extraordinary." Soviet Spokesman Gennadi Gerasimov concurred: "They are obviously quite interested in each other," despite holding "quite contrary views."

Indeed, Thatcher and her host clashed sharply over Soviet proposals to withdraw U.S. and Soviet intermediate-range nuclear missiles from Europe as the first step in an arms-control push aimed at reductions in all offensive weapons

from the Atlantic to central Siberia. Thatcher made it clear in Moscow, she distrusts the vision of a completely denuclearized Europe—and the resulting Soviet superiority in conventional forces.

Thatcher has the support of NATO strategists, who point out that nuclear weapons transfigure a potential battlefield: as long as there is a nuclear capability in Western Europe, the Soviets cannot concentrate troops for fear of exposing them to nuclear attack. Deployment by massed Warsaw Pact forces becomes more dangerous, as does resupply.

Thatcher did not mince her words on the subject. "A world without nuclear weapons," she said in a speech at the Kremlin, "would be less stable and more dangerous for all of us." During her TV press conference with Soviet journalists (see box), she explained that "conventional weapons have not stopped two world wars in Europe in this century . . . Never think that conventional war would be

such clash in the Kremlin, Gorbachev suggested they switch to a more intimate room. "I am moving us to the red room," he said, laughing, "to see if I can change your mind." They moved, but her mind did not change.

In her televised press conference, Thatcher informed Soviet viewers of things they had probably never been told before: the Soviet Union has more intercontinental ballistic missiles, more nuclear warheads, more intermediate-range forces and more short-range rockets than the West. "You have more than anyone else," she said. Her eyes flashed when one questioner, a uniformed lieutenant colonel representing *Red Star*, the Defense Ministry newspaper, asked about NATO's Pershing II and cruise-missile deployment, which began in 1983. Thatcher explained that the Western allies had urged Moscow not to install its SS-20 missiles in Eastern Europe; yet even after the Soviets ignored the West's pleas, NATO still wait-



Applause at the Bolshoi: at intermission, a Thatcher-Gorbachev debate on arms control

some cozy alternative; it would be terrible." Thatcher told Gorbachev that Britain would retain its independent nuclear force and added that the Soviet Union was mistaken if it assumed Western Europe could be separated from the U.S. Gorbachev challenged her peace-keeping thesis. Said he: "It is beyond our understanding how one can heap praise on nuclear arms. For political and moral reasons, we cannot accept that notion." Nuclear deterrence, he said, was a "safety fuse attached to an explosive device capable of annihilating our civilization."

According to those familiar with the tone of the private sessions, there were moments when Thatcher and Gorbachev argued so fiercely that their faces were only inches apart. At other times they erupted in laughter. In the midst of one

ed four years for its countermove. She pointed out that the Soviet Union was upgrading its antimissile system around Moscow and was working on laser and pulse-beam defense systems. "You have the only antisatellite system in the world," she said. "We're not complaining, but don't ignore what you're doing in the Soviet Union. We don't."

Despite the lack of agreement on approaches to arms control—or of any breakthrough in general—the visit was a personal triumph for Thatcher, something that might stand her in good stead in national elections, expected later this year. The Soviet Union, the country that first called her the Iron Lady, seemed to respond to her directness, her command of complex issues, her toughness, even her charm. In subfreezing temperatures in a



Readying the guard in Tbilisi



Reaching out: with priests at Trinity Monastery of St. Sergius



Matching wits: the leaders get down



to the "nitty-gritty" at the Kremlin



Dressing up: Georgians welcome their British guest



Honoring the Unknown Soldier

Moscow suburb, crowds cheered and applauded as she toured a housing complex. A wizened babushka planted a kiss on the startled Thatcher's cheek, saying in Russian, "You've brought us happiness." Said a young mother who shook the Prime Minister's hand: "I hope she can use her influence for peace." Moved by the reception, Thatcher clambered onto the running board of her ZIL limousine to wave to the throngs. In Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, thousands of people lined the streets, and flowers were strewn as her motorcade passed. Presented with roses and carnations, her hand and cheek kissed by young men, Thatcher exclaimed, "My memories of the Russian people are about how friendly they are."

Gorbachev, according to Soviet officials, found his conversations with Thatcher to be more straightforward and useful than those he had had with other

Western leaders. She was seen by Soviet diplomats as more sophisticated than both Reagan and Kohl and more firmly in charge of her government than either Mitterrand or Premier Jacques Chirac, who are hobbled by *cohabitation*, their power-sharing arrangement. Above all, Gorbachev seemed pleased to begin a dialogue based on "confidence and trust," the words Thatcher repeatedly used to describe the basis for arms-control progress. "If he told me he was going to do something," Thatcher said of Gorbachev as she flew back to London, "I would implicitly accept his word."

For Gorbachev, who has said that foreign policy is closely linked to his efforts at internal reform, Thatcher's trust, so publicly announced, was an invaluable gain: he had apparently managed to convince the Prime Minister that, however slowly, he was bringing fundamental

change to the Soviet Union. Given Thatcher's status, that was a message likely to make some impact in Washington. Last month Thatcher met in London with U.S. Under Secretary of State Michael Armacost, who, on his way home after a visit to Moscow, briefed her on U.S. arms-control ideas and Soviet responses. "We are not displeased at all," said a State Department official last week, "that Gorbachev has got a very frank, factual appraisal of certain Western positions from Thatcher."

Thatcher supported what Gorbachev has called his "revolution." Said she: "A more open society—more open discussion and wider freedoms and an economy based more on incentives—is in the long-term interest not only of the Soviet Union but of the West as well." She praised her host: "I could not have come to the Soviet Union at a more interesting or crucial time. And I

have been rewarded by a remarkable insight from Mr. Gorbachev. I do not think I have ever spent so much time in discussion with another world leader."

Her rapport with Gorbachev did not prevent Thatcher from pressing him on the sensitive issues of Afghanistan and human rights. She bluntly demanded that the Soviets withdraw their forces from Afghanistan "with the shortest possible delay." In his response, Gorbachev said the troops would be pulled out in the framework of a political settlement and a "national reconciliation program." He criticized those who would "put spokes in the wheels of that process."

On human rights, Thatcher pulled no punches. "We hear your references to openness, democratization, independent judiciary and economic incentives," she said. "But we will reach our judgments not on intentions or on promises but on deeds

and results." Gorbachev's reply was vigorous—and predictable. He called human rights an internal matter and questioned the right of "capitalists" to criticize the Soviet Union when their own societies suffered from unemployment, homelessness and racial discrimination.

Thatcher also discussed human rights during her lunch with Sakharov. The Soviet scientist, credited with being the father of the Soviet H-bomb, said the regime's release of political prisoners "has to be a gradual process. So far there have been about 100 freed. This is a huge event, very important for us." He added, "*Glasnost* is very important for our country and for the whole world. Without it, development is impossible." In urging the West to take a more positive view of the changes under way in his country, Sakharov said he supported Gorbachev "wholeheartedly."

No sooner had Thatcher returned to

London than her visit began to add fuel to Western Europe's growing debate over how to defend itself in a world where nothing seems totally certain anymore, neither the U.S. nuclear guarantee nor the Soviets' stance. U.S. allies in Europe have yet to recover from the superpower summit in Reykjavik last year when Ronald Reagan and Gorbachev seemed to blithely contemplate huge cuts in nuclear arms. Says Admiral Pierre Lacoste, president of France's Foundation for National Defense Studies: "Reykjavik sounded an alarm. It told Europeans that Washington and Moscow might decide to solve their strategic problems between themselves and leave the Europeans out of the picture." Political and financial pressures, some West Europeans feel, will eventually push Washington to bring home some, if not all, of the 325,000 U.S. troops assigned to NATO in Europe. Cautions a senior

A TV Tour de Force

On the fourth day of her historic trip, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher startled Soviet television viewers with a bold, aggressive interview with Soviet journalists that was unprecedented, at least for the Soviet Union, in its frankness. Excerpts:

Q. Can we speak of concrete results from your meetings with Mr. Gorbachev?

A. We have signed some agreements. An important one is on the hot line, which will enable us to get in touch with one another with great efficiency; also on cultural exchanges and quite a number on trade. I think the most important talks were on arms control, where we more or less agreed on the approach to intermediate nuclear weapons. Also, we had special talks about chemical weapons.

We in Britain destroyed our chemical weapons toward the end of the 1950s, and the U.S. did not modernize theirs. But the Soviet Union has modernized them and has a large stockpile. This gives us cause for great concern. So we are very pleased that Mr. Gorbachev has accepted our proposals for inspection, to try to ensure that these weapons are destroyed.

Q. What is Britain doing to strengthen global security?

A. Every nation has the right to defend its own security. You

have the Warsaw Pact; we have NATO. We believe in a nuclear deterrent. Conventional weapons have not stopped two world wars in Europe in this century. One of the reasons we have had peace in Europe for 40 years is the existence of that nuclear deterrent . . . It is peace which I am after. I do not understand why you concentrate only on the abolition of nuclear weapons. It is peace I am after.

Q. But many times we were on the verge of nuclear war in those 40 years.

A. Are you not making my point? If you say that many times we were on the verge of war and we did not go to war, do you not think one of the reasons that we did not go to war was the total horror of nuclear weapons? Conventional weapons did not stop a war, a terrible war, in which the Soviet Union suffered enormously. You cannot just act as if there had never been nuclear weapons. If conventional war started again, the race would be on as to who got the nuclear weapon first . . .

There is another reason for smaller countries like us. The nuclear deterrent is the only thing which enables smaller countries to stand up to a bigger country. Historically Britain had to stand alone. Europe was occupied by Hitler. We were alone.

Q. The thing is that there is a possibility of an accidental outbreak of a nuclear conflict.

A. There are more nuclear weapons in the Soviet Union

than in any other country in the world. You have more intercontinental ballistic missiles and warheads than the West. You started intermediate weapons; we did not have any. You have more short-range ones than we have. You have more than anyone else, and you say there is a risk of a nuclear accident. May I assure you that the Soviet Union has been very careful with the massive amount of nuclear weapons she has, as has the West.

Q. At what stage does Britain envisage getting involved in the arms-control process?

A. We should have at least a 50% reduction on the large intercontinental ballistic missiles. In a speech I said to Mr. Gorbachev, "That will be my objective." So yes, get the big ones down; yes, get the medium ones out; yes, get chemical [weapons] abandoned; and then yes, look at conventional [forces]. You have far more conventional weapons than we have, far more tanks, far more aircraft. Get those down to balance, and then we will be making really practical progress.

In the meantime, let us do everything we can to have a more open society . . . I think Mr. Gorbachev's new proposals are the most exciting I have heard in a very long time. A more open society, new incentives, restructuring. Look, this is a challenge, which is fantastic, and we earnestly wish you well. We believe that if we get to know one another better, we believe that we will be able to reduce weapons, all kinds, far more. That is what I want to do.

Q. But on the way to such a radical reduction, the so-called Strategic Defense Initiative destabilizes the situation.

A. SDI is only in the research stage. The U.S. is not the only country doing research on that. The Soviet Union has a very good antiballistic-missile defense system around Moscow, and 20 years of experience, more than anyone else. You have the only antisatellite system in the world. I do not understand when in one and the same breath you say to me, "The nuclear weapon is the worst in the world," which I agree with, "and you must not try to get a defense against that weapon." Do you not think it would be better if you did have a defense against that weapon? There is the possibility of a few getting through. The threat would be so terrible that no one would embark upon war.

Q. Why has Washington called for the so-called broad interpretation of the ABM (Antiballistic Missile) Treaty?

A. I can only give you an answer based on common sense, not on legal technicalities. How can you start negotiating on deployment before you know whether or not a thing works? Of course, you have to test. Good heavens! We know yours works, and we know that you have updated it. We know that you are working on lasers very heavily, and we are not complaining.



Common cause: Premier Jacques Chirac and President Reagan in Washington

NATO analyst: "You'd have to be very optimistic to believe the U.S. level of support for Europe will remain the same."

In the U.S., the most articulate and forceful arguments for a partial U.S. military withdrawal from Europe have come from Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jimmy Carter's former National Security Adviser, who has proposed the pullout of 100,000 U.S. troops. Brzezinski and others argue that the likelihood of a war in the NATO area is remote, that the region is already well defended and that U.S. troops would be more useful in other parts of the world, like the Persian Gulf. Such voices have been firmly countered by the Reagan Administration. Like a low-grade fever, however, the withdrawal issue refuses to

disappear and surfaces whenever the U.S. becomes irritated with its allies.

If a U.S. troop thin-out still seems a relatively long-term possibility, a superpower accord on intermediate-range missiles is seen as more imminent. Removal of the Pershing II and cruise missiles, argue some European analysts, would weaken the U.S. nuclear commitment to the European allies. While Thatcher met with Gorbachev, Premier Chirac was in Washington, hearing assurances to the contrary: that the U.S. would not leave Western Europe at the mercy of short-range Soviet missiles. Still, unease persists. Says Christoph Bertram, diplomatic editor of the Hamburg weekly *Die Zeit* and former director of the International

Europe

Institute for Strategic Studies: "There's a sense that no one knows what's going on in Washington."

As West Europeans are trying to respond to subtle changes in what they used to consider a secure NATO framework, their response has been a growing interest in the development of a West European defense system that would eventually be less dependent on the U.S. Rhetorically, at least, it seems to be a subject whose time has come. British Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe warned last month that greater inter-European defense cooperation constituted an insurance policy against the day when European and U.S. security interests might diverge. Said Howe: "We need to be alert to trends in American thinking which might diminish our security—perhaps not today or tomorrow but in the longer term." Howe proposed that the Paris-based seven-nation Western European Union (WEU), a fledgling Euro-defense grouping formed in 1955, be revitalized as the European pillar of NATO. In turn, Jacques Delors, who runs the European Community's executive machinery, made a surprise proposal for a twelvemonth E.C. summit on security and East-West relations.

Changing attitudes on the part of Europe's big three—Britain, France and West Germany—suggest that the latest impulse toward a Euro-defense grouping could move beyond the talking stage. John Roper of Britain's Royal Institute of International Affairs observes that both Britain and West Germany have become somewhat disillusioned about their respective "special relationships" with Washington. Says Roper: "The British and the Germans

have come to realize that the Channel and the Rhine are not as wide as the Atlantic." Europe, he says, "is habit-forming."

For the moment the French are the most outspoken boosters of Euro-defense, something Mitterrand calls the culminating act in the construction of Europe. Chirac presented a charter for European defense at a WEU meeting earlier this year. Jacques Chaban-Delmas, the Gaullist president of the National Assembly, is drafting a report on the European contribution to NATO for the Action Committee for Europe, a powerful lobbying group that favors European integration. With movement toward political union stalled within the E.C., some believers in the European ideal are seizing on the defense issue as a tool to break the impasse.

Despite official disclaimers, the French have gone through a major evolution in their thinking about European defense. Says Gregory Flynn of the Atlantic Institute: "With tremendous changes occurring in Moscow, Washington and Bonn, France's basic assumptions about its own security are changing." Mitterrand was the first French President to say openly that French troops would very likely be deployed if West Germany was attacked. The result was the creation of a 45,000-man air-mobile rapid deployment force. Says Admiral Lacoste: "Many people say it would not represent much of an obstacle to a serious Soviet attack, but as a sign of political engagement, it is extraordinary."

The West Germans, who are barred from possessing nuclear weapons and whose country would be the first battleground in an East-West conflict, are perhaps most skeptical of any major realignment within NATO. Just how serious, they



United front: Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterrand consult in France

ask, will a European, particularly French, commitment be when it comes to the actual integration of European troops and higher defense budgets to replace the U.S. presence? Says a senior West German policy adviser: "We still have lots of disagreements with the French."

It will be a long time, defense experts believe, before the West European allies are capable of creating an integrated military alliance among themselves, if only because the implicit loss of national sovereignty will be hard to swallow. The Euro-defense movement labors under another handicap: it must assert a European voice without provoking suspicions in Washington that Western Europe is ganging up on the U.S. Finally, more Euro-defense

will mean big increases in defense budgets. Says Roper: "I wouldn't be too optimistic about more resources for better security, with Gorbachev smiling away out there."

Still, if Gorbachev could be pleased to have made a friend in Thatcher, he had hardly changed her perceptions. Back in London, red-eyed from fatigue though still exhilarated, Thatcher conceded that she was concerned the Soviets might be engaged in "salami tactics for denuclearizing Europe"—slicing off a bit at a time. Greater trust, yes, but fundamental disagreements remained.

—By Frederick Painton.
Reported by William Dowell/Paris, Christopher Ogden with Thatcher and Christopher Redman/Brussels, with other bureaus

Peer Pressure

When it comes to troubleshooting within the Western Alliance, Lord Carrington, NATO's Secretary-General, is without question top gun. Two weeks ago, the former British Foreign Secretary helped defuse a crisis when Greece and Turkey, ostensible allies within the NATO pact, threatened to come to blows over oil-exploration rights in the Aegean Sea. Last week Carrington arrived in the U.S. with an ultimately more important mission: to head off a potential misunderstanding in the alliance's ranks caused by Western Europe's newly developing interest in its own security.

The problem facing NATO is that go-it-alone efforts by West Europeans to boost their defenses could weaken security ties with Washington. A stronger Western Europe might encourage the U.S. to bring home its troops and weapons. West European self-help could also be construed in the U.S. not as a response to a Soviet threat but as a vote of no confidence in Washington's leadership.

Interviewed by TIME Senior Writer Frederick Painton and Correspondent Christopher Redman at alliance headquarters in Brussels before his departure for the U.S. last week, Carrington conceded that a more self-reliant Europe could unsettle the U.S., which has become sensitive to signs of anti-

Americanism. Said he: "Sometimes the Europeans may seem to be acting just a little too independently, and that may make for American irritation." Carrington insisted, however, that a stronger Europe would be to NATO's advantage. "I think it's quite wrong to suppose," he argued, "that the idea of Europeans getting together is a weakening of the alliance. The idea is to make it stronger."



Alliance troubleshooter: NATO Secretary-General Lord Carrington in Brussels office

By boosting military cooperation among themselves, Carrington explained, West Europeans would be doing what many Americans have been demanding all along: shouldering a greater share of the common defense burden. "I think it's a very good thing that the Europeans should worry more about their defense," said Carrington. "The Americans ought to worry if they didn't."



Soviet soldiers and West Germans during Warsaw Pact maneuvers in East Germany

In a speech to the Southern Center for International Studies in Atlanta later in the week, Carrington underlined the dangers of withdrawing U.S. troops from Europe. A U.S. pull-back, he conceded, might have the positive outcome of triggering a "vigorous Western European effort to make up for American withdrawal in both conventional and nuclear terms." But

the move could backfire if it led to the Soviets' increasing arms production or even striking at Western Europe to forestall a buildup by the West. Carrington warned that a U.S. withdrawal could even cause defeatism among European allies unable to fill the gap left by the U.S. departure, and concluded, "If all you can afford is insufficient defense, you might as well have none at all."

In the three years in which he has held the top job at NATO, Carrington has seen the alliance weather the crisis of Euromissile deployments and has spoken out forcefully against Western Europe's unilateral disarmament movement. Now, ironically, the task for this arch-Atlanticist is to reassure Americans that Europeans still want them. Says Carrington: "I do not think there is one member of the European side of the alliance who does not think NATO and the American involvement in the alliance is the most important thing as far as Europe's security is concerned. There is no substitute for American involvement in Europe's defense."