

Prime Minister



MS

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A EUROPEAN INITIATIVE ON EAST/WEST ISSUES

Could you contemplate an initiative with some (though not all the) European allies to suggest that we work out together our approach to the USSR in the post-Andropov era?

The countries with whom we could collaborate in such an idea might be France, Germany and Italy - the three Western European countries who take risks direct with their territory by having strategic and nuclear weapons on it (Spain might be added, if we thought that worthwhile).

This would be plainly a "European" initiative, but one taken outside the community and so would not be hamstrung by all these minor nations, such as Greece or Holland, who are inclined to take up strong up moral attitudes on subjects for which they wish to evade responsibility.

The benefits of this would be that it would help on the one hand to calm people who say we are doing nothing about the "post-Andropov opportunity" in the U.S. election year, and on the other hand perhaps help towards recovery of some of the lost souls tempted towards neutralism - of whom there are on the continent a vast number and many inside the supposedly "right of centre parties".

Another benefit would be that it would limit the unseemly business which we have so often seen over the last forty years, of individual European leaders trekking off to Moscow with their hopes of securing political benefits - e.g. Wilson, Schmidt, Giscard - with no real impact on Soviet thinking.

Finally, well managed, an initiative of this sort could help to promote the Government's reputation in this country as interested in the larger as well as the smaller scale of "Europe".

If this idea were to be accepted, it should, of course, be sold to the U.S. beforehand and the point about European neutralism stressed.

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