



Offroy: 'Are we to be vassals?'

The following article, "We Are All Hostages," is translated from the French daily Le Monde of May 6, and was penned by Raymond Offroy, the former French ambassador to Mexico. It provides yet another striking example of coverage in the major European papers of stories the U.S. media blacks out. Three months ago, Ambassador Offroy visited New Hampshire, warning that war was in the offing in the Mideast. The local Associated Press correspondent refused to cover Offroy on the grounds that the veteran French diplomat "did not exist."

The confused explanations which have been given on the recent American military expedition in Iran should not fool anyone: the adventure did not succeed because it was not designed to succeed. With or without the breakdown of some of the helicopters, the execution of the second and third phases would never have been ordered.

There is manifold proof of this: that only eight helicopters were sent, although the fragility of this equipment is known and it was stated that at least six of them would be needed to attempt the operation—twelve of them would have had to be sent to achieve the indispensable (safety) margin; the removal of the (sand) filters, although the helicopters were taking off for a desert where sand storms are frequent; the weakness of commando operations where it was a question of taking over an embassy located in the middle of a large capital, neutralizing its guards, and confronting a violently hostile population; the precariousness of an eventual safe return of the helicopters to their bases in the desert, loaded with fifty American hostages, despite the Iranian air force and the vulnerability of this means of transport.

The resignation of Cyrus Vance, which was handed in before the expedition even started, that is to say, if we are to believe the official version, before it was known whether it would succeed, proves once more that nobody in Washington envisaged the possible success of this team.

"The only treaties that should count," Paul Valery used to say, "are those concluded between ulterior motives." What were they in this affair? Obviously to intimidate the Europeans. It was necessary to demonstrate

to Paris, as well as Bonn and Rome, that American threats of military intervention—if Atlantic solidarity was not played in full—were not empty. It was necessary to prove that if Europe did not commit itself fully in America's quarrel, then a hazardous initiative by Washington, which could bring about an armed conflict, was not to be excluded.

For in this whole affair it was less a question of saving the hostages or liberating Afghanistan than it was to bring Europe into line: to threaten Europe with control over its oil supplies through an eventual blockade of the Hormuz Straits, to transform Europe into a group of countries as docile as the Soviet satellites in the Warsaw Pact.

In this scheme, Great Britain—which alone was warned of the Iranian expedition—could give itself the luxury of playing the role of arbiter and intermediary between the United States and Europe. It is undoubtedly from this that Mrs. Thatcher's intransigence at the Luxembourg summit came.

There is a double objective: if the Soviet Union backs down before the American military initiatives, then Washington, with the backing of London, would have converted continental Europe into vassals, with all the consequences this entails.

If, on the contrary, the Russian bear bristles, war will once again take place in Europe, and the United States, as in 1917 and 1941, will be able to intervene in the place and time of its own choosing.

Let us hope that our leaders will see in time the trap which is being laid for them, and won't let themselves be sheared like the sheep, (Britain) wants to sell us at low prices.

The possibility of another American military operation in that region is now being announced if Atlantic solidarity fails to take concrete steps: the Iranian fiasco makes this threat all the more plausible since the determining role now vested in Mr. Brzezinski, in fact, eliminates the last restraints on President Carter. It is up to us to see where we are being led before doing the irreparable, that is placing ourselves in the front lines of Moscow's eventual reactions.