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APPROACHES AND REPROACHES IN EUROPE

THE state visit to France which the Queen is to pay next May is the second during her reign. The first was in 1957, before General de Gaulle came to power. The sequel was not happy, but now friendship between Britain and France is restored. Unfortunately this has been accompanied by a distinct chill in relations between France and Germany.

When Dr. Kiesinger was Chancellor, he appeared ready to subject everything to French approval. Herr Brandt, then his Foreign Minister, was obviously irritated by this subservience and disregard of his own judgment. When he came to power he embarked with vigour on his *Ostpolitik*. The Government at Bonn was no longer willing to "play the economic giant and the political pygmy", and such independence aroused envy and even fear in some French quarters.

A material cause of coolness was the divergence of view about international monetary policy. President Nixon's measures to meet the dollar crisis were resented in Germany. An unwelcome upward re-valuation of the D-Mark by about 7 per cent accompanied the American surcharge on imports. The effect of both on German exports was serious. For the first time for many years there was an increase in unemployment—only 0.8 per cent, it is true, but that is double the rate of early this year.

There has also been a disturbing increase in short working time. The German trade unions are consequently restive. France, on the other hand, disliked the floating exchange rate of the D-Mark, and feels much less sensitive to American economic troubles than the West German Government. The floating German rate has seriously upset the Franco-German trade balance which had been in France's favour. The communications that have gone to and fro between Paris and Bonn on this subject during the past few weeks have caused great annoyance on both sides. Chancellor Brandt's call, made on French television, for an early meeting to deal with the crisis caused resentment in Paris, while President Pompidou's "condescending" reply aroused equal irritation in Bonn. The Chancellor wants a common European front; President Pompidou does not entirely share this view, and is decidedly less anxious than Herr Brandt to seek a solution acceptable to America.

The situation seems eminently one in which the British Government could play a conciliatory part. The present coolness between Paris and Bonn does not imply that either side is weakening in their fundamental policy of mutual friendship, without which, as Herr Brandt has repeated, the unity of Europe would be impossible.

CHINA, RUSSIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

THE appearance of Communist China on the world stage has given a new twist to the Middle East imbroglio. China refused to accept the Israeli Foreign Minister's telegram of congratulations on her admission to the UN. Her support of the Palestine guerrillas has been raising Middle East tension for some time. Now it seems that Peking will step up this policy by open enmity to Israel in the UN.

Up to now the Americans and the Russians have worked their Middle East policy as a duet, without bothering about the UN, or even Britain and France. With China's entry on the scene, this is no longer possible. The probability is that for the next few months the Chinese representatives at the UN will behave admirably. But this does not mean that they will abstain from intrigues, or that they will lessen their financial and moral assistance to the Palestine guerrillas. It is even conceivable that Chinese instructors will set them on their feet again. It is significant that neither the Egyptians, nor the Syrians, nor even the Libyans have done anything practical to restore El

Fattah. That may be the rôle the Chinese will adopt.

It may be objected that Russia also opposes Israel, and therefore Communist China is bound to veer to the other side. This is by no means certain. Peking and Moscow may find themselves on the same side in their attitude to Israel, but for totally different reasons. In 1948, when Israel came into existence, Moscow not only voted in its favour, but was the first great Power to recognise it. If Soviet policy has changed, this was not for ideological reasons, but for reasons of national self-interest. The Soviets have sided with the Arabs because they own the oil which Russia covets and which she wants to deny to the West. Besides, she still harbours the illusion that the quarrelsome and ill-organised Arabs might be pressed into service for Soviet ends. But Russia's anti-Israel policy always meant to stop short of war. The fact that, in 1967, her manipulations overshot the mark and led to the fight in which the Egyptian, Jordanian and Syrian armies were defeated, was the result of miscalculation, not intention. Neither President