

Herald INTERNATIONAL Tribune

Published With The New York Times and The Washington Post

The Seven and the Gulf

The summit meeting in Venice is being described as a disappointment for the United States, which wanted a more demonstrative endorsement of its Gulf policy. But leave aside that it was imprudent for the administration to publicize its hopes in this matter in advance. It was even less prudent not to anticipate that the allies would be sobered by the stunning secret turn that American policy toward Iran and terrorism had taken during the last few years. For the allies now to embrace Mr. Reagan's policies as though he had not raised the deepest doubts about his credibility was never in the cards. Bungles have a cost.

But what about the allies? Are they as detached as depicted in some quarters? The issue is relevant to the effectiveness of American policy and to the support for it likely to come from Congress, which tends to view allied cooperation as the standard by which it should measure out its own support for the Reagan initiative. The evidence available at Venice was not cheering.

But the evidence available in the Gulf is different. The United States is not alone there, as the more alarmist congressional sentiment suggests. The British and French have warships there. The U.S. government, to keep itself from looking isolated and reactive, exaggerates the extent of allied cooperation. But some in Congress, putting a strategic gloss on jitter, minimize it.

Besides, the Russians are now in the Gulf. This cuts several ways. The Soviet Navy has made a historic leap into a region from which it has been the Western strategic purpose for a century or more to exclude a Russian presence. This leap created an absolute requirement for any would-be great power to offset the new Soviet presence — not to be careless, but to act. Instinctively and intellectually, the allies understood this large requirement; that is why, nervous as they may be about Mr. Reagan, they accept his "reflagging" of Kuwaiti ships. Some in Congress have not yet understood, and focus less on the rationale than on the risks.

Not out of any love for America, but in pursuit of its own interests, the Kremlin, in moving its fleet into the Gulf, is reinforcing goals held by the West: free navigation, containment of Iran, a negotiated end to the war. The administration is unaccustomed to finding itself with even so scanty and partial a convergence of interests with Moscow as this. But the tactical uses of this convergence are there to be applied. It makes the U.S. intervention marginally safer, and gives Russians and Americans incentive to see the other succeed. The administration, which needs to build international and domestic support for a sound policy, would profit from making the point.

— THE WASHINGTON POST.

Quiet Progress on Terror

A major move against international terrorism lies buried deep in the sonorous Venice declaration. The leaders of the seven industrial powers pledged to impose aviation sanctions when a country refuses to extradite or punish hijackers. If the leaders mean what they quietly promise, commercial air flights to offending states should cease "immediately."

That is a lawful weapon with a cutting edge. Unsheathing it helps atone for the failure at Venice to renew last year's call for banning arms sales to states supporting terrorism. Washington violated that policy with its arms sales to Iran, which must explain why Secretary of State George Shultz chooses to shrug off the missing renewal.

Iran flagrantly scorns civil aviation treaties adopted at The Hague and Montreal, which call for a total embargo of countries sheltering hijackers. Tehran has not extradited or punished those who hijacked a Kuwaiti airliner to Iran, where two Ameri-

cans were killed in December 1984. Yet the same mullahs piously invoke international law in protesting the arrest in Britain of an Iranian diplomat charged with shoplifting. High time to enforce international aviation treaties and suspend all flights by European and Japanese carriers to Iran.

The embargo weapon works. At their Bonn meeting in 1978, the seven also adopted a tough statement on aviation sanctions. They then privately threatened enforcement unless Libya ceased sheltering hijackers. At least for a while, Libya stopped. But Europeans have been reluctant to put lucrative air routes at risk, and allied solidarity vanished last year when the Reagan administration pleaded for air sanctions just before its strike at Tripoli.

An air embargo is easy to impose. It is a widely endorsed penalty that fits the crime. The Venice seven can now show that they mean business by using it.

— THE NEW YORK TIMES.