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Reply to Order 117, adopted on 17th January 1958, on the military implications for the security of the West of the plans for regional and limited disarmament and of a policy of disengagement in Central Europe

Communication



A. Draft Resolution expressing an opinion on the military implications for the security of the West of the plans for regional or limited disarmament and of a policy of disengagement in Central Europe, at the request of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe

The Assembly,

Having considered the request for an Opinion on the military implications for the security of the West of the plans for regional or limited disarmament and of a policy of disengagement in Central Europe referred to it by the Consultative Assembly;

Having studied in particular the Rapacki Plan for creating a denuclearised zone in Central Europe, and the principle of disengagement in this area,

Expresses the opinion:

1. that the adoption of the Rapacki Plan:
 1. would, while offering no compensating advantages, gravely endanger the security of the West, for the following reasons:
 1. it would restore the superiority of the Soviet forces in conventional weapons and in manpower in this area, depriving N. A. T. O. of an effective " shield ";
 2. it would lead to the withdrawal of the bulk of Anglo-American forces from Germany and from the European continent, since the two Governments would not agree to maintain their troops if they were denied modern atomic weapons;
 3. it would deprive the West of sufficient depth of territory for the effective deployment of its forces;
 4. it would commit N. A. T. O. almost exclusively to a strategy of massive retaliation;
 5. it would deny Germany any defensive atomic weapons which may be developed in the future ;
 6. it would involve a special status for Germany within N. A. T. O. ;
 2. would perpetuate the status quo in Europe, i.e. the division of Germany and Soviet control of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe;
2. that a policy of disengagement involving a military withdrawal of NATO troops from Western Germany and of Russian troops from Central and Eastern Europe :
 - a. would constitute a mortal danger for the West if it were not to be accompanied by :

the political withdrawal of the Soviet Union from the part of Europe now occupied and controlled by it; and

a thoroughly controlled and inspected general agreement on disarmament between East and West;
 - b. would not be acceptable unless a neutralisation of Western Germany was specifically excluded;
3. that Member States should be recommended to formulate political and military proposals based on the views of the NATO military authorities as to what reciprocal concessions could be made without weakening the defensive power of the West beyond the point of an acceptable military risk.

B. Minority opinion

The following alternative draft Resolution was rejected by 9 votes to 4 with 1 abstention:

The Assembly,

Having considered the request for an Opinion on the military implications for the security of the West of regional or limited disarmament, and of a policy of disengagement in Central Europe referred to it by the Consultative Assembly;

Having studied in particular t h e Rapacki Plan for creating a denuclearised zone in Europe, and the principle of disengagement in this area;

Leaving aside the definition of political requirements which must accompany the implementation of any proposal, such as the reunification of Germany and the restoration of independence in Central and Eastern European countries;

Considering the two great military advantages enjoyed by the Soviets to be their overwhelming superiority in conventional forces and their great depth of territory,

Expresses the opinion:

1. that under present conditions of mutual distrust between East and West only a limited and regional disarmament proposal has a chance of being realised;
2. that any regional proposal for the limitation of nuclear weapons is unacceptable to the West unless it applies equally to conventional forces stationed in the region and is subject to control by international inspection teams enjoying full liberty of movement within the region;
3. that any disengagement involving the withdrawal of allied troops from their most easterly positions in Eastern Europe is unacceptable to the West unless the Soviet troops withdraw from an area comparable to that proposed in the Rapacki Plan, and unless adequate compensatory facilities are provided for installing ground and air control and warning units over a still greater depth of territory;
4. that, as the Rapacki proposals in their present form are unacceptable, Member States should be recommended to formulate counterproposals based on the views of the NATO military authorities as to which reciprocal concessions could be made without weakening the defensive power of the West beyond the point of an acceptable military risk.

C. Explanatory Memorandum

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1.

From the debates in the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe in January 1958, which resulted inter alia in an invitation being sent to the Assembly of Western European Union to pronounce on the military implications for the security of the West of regional or limited disarmament and of a policy of disengagement in Central Europe, it is obvious that the Consultative Assembly had chiefly in mind the consequences of accepting the so-called Rapacki Plan. In view of this it seems advisable for our Assembly to limit itself principally to this Plan when giving its opinion on the consequences. For the rest, it is important to go into the idea of disengagement which, it is true, has not been brought up in the form of a concrete official governmental proposal, but which appears again and again in public discussions.

2. The scope and origin of the Rapacki plan

At a meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations on 2nd October 1957, the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. Rapacki, put forward the idea of creating a zone in Central Europe where the production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons would be prohibited, together with the installations necessary for launching them. Nor would nuclear weapons launched elsewhere be used against targets in this zone. More details were given by the Polish Government in a Memorandum of 14th February 1958, which expressed the wish that an efficient system of control and inspection should be agreed upon in order to guarantee the observance of the proposed agreement.

In the various statements M. Rapacki has made to the press about his proposal, he has asserted that it is a Polish concept, approved by the other signatories of the Warsaw Pact. The concept can, however, be found among the Soviet proposals submitted to the Sub-Commission on Disarmament of the United Nations on 27th March 1956. On that date M. Gromyko proposed " the creation of a zone of limitation and of inspection of armament in Europe."

This proposal was formulated as follows:

" The agreement will stipulate that the stationing of military formations provided with atomic weapons and the depositing of atomic and hydrogen weapons of all kinds shall be prohibited in this zone ".

The Rapacki Plan is identical with the Gromyko Plan. For tactical reasons it has apparently received a Polish label.

The prohibition proposed by M. Rapacki refers to the production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons of all types and to the installation of " equipment or installations for delivering nuclear weapons, including rocket-launching ramps ". It extends expressly to the holding of these weapons by foreign troops stationed in the zone.

The Powers possessing nuclear weapons would bind themselves not to use these weapons against any targets situated in the prohibited zone.

The zone would cover the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Republic of Pankow, Poland and Czechoslovakia.

The Plan proposes " a system of extensive and effective control " which could comprise " ground as well as air control " and " control post with rights and facilities for action ensuring effective inspection ". The " control machinery " could be constituted by representatives appointed by the organs of N. A. T. O . and the Warsaw Pact and possibly by representatives of neutral States.

Although expressing a preference for the conclusion of an international agreement, the Polish memorandum would allow the commitments by States to be embodied in the form of a unilateral declaration — this in order to overcome the obstacle of the non-recognition of the Republic of Pankow by the Federal Republic of Germany and the Western Powers

3. Military disadvantages of the Rapacki plan

1. The Rapacki proposal calls for denuclearisation of all forces in an area composed of the two Germanies, Poland and Czechoslovakia. As a major portion of N. A. T. O.'s forces must be located in the Federal Republic of Germany in order to provide a defensive shield to protect Western Europe, and as N. A. T. O. cannot hope to create a conventional military force which is the numerical equal of that of the Soviet Union, the effect of a proposal to deprive NATO forces of atomic weapons would be to deprive N. A. T. O. of an effective defence. There can be no assurance that the relatively small NATO force in the Central European area could hold against numerically superior Soviet forces (1:6) unless they have available atomic weapons which can make such NATO forces both effective and decisive.

2. A major part of N. A. T. O.'s forces must be deployed in Germany. We could not make our plans on the assumption that German forces, which will comprise almost one-half of N.A.T.O.'s strength in the Central European area, should be deployed outside of Germany because they will be urgently needed in Germany itself. The failure to equip such forces with modern atomic weapons would mean that German forces would be incapable of fulfilling any effective deterrent role towards the Soviet Union. It would further involve a special status for Germany within N. A. T. O., with consequent psychological problems for the German people, denied as they would be of any effective defence against a Soviet attack.

3. It is impossible to imagine that non- German forces would remain in the German area if they were denied the means to be effective i.e. modern atomic weapons. This in turn would inevitably lead to the withdrawal of the bulk of the Anglo-American forces from the European continent. Such a withdrawal would for geographical reasons be back to the United States in the case of American forces, and to the United Kingdom in the case of British forces. This would effectively eliminate the possibility of these forces participating in any war that might occur, because the time required to return them to the battle zone would not enable them to arrive before the decisive phase of the battle had passed.

4. Thus, as at present proposed, the call for the Rapacki Plan amounts to a call for unilateral disarmament.

5. The effect of this proposal on NATO strategy would, of necessity, be to commit N. A. T. O. almost exclusively to a strategy of massive retaliation, since N. A. T. O. would be denied the additional possibility of employing the shield concept with its far greater flexibility

6. Restrictions which would prohibit the stationing of atomic weapons in the Federal Republic of Germany would deny the Germans any defensive atomic weapons which may be developed in the future (anti-missiles). While the most suitable areas for the deployment of such weapons are unknown at this time, it may well be desirable that such weapons be deployed as far forward as possible in order that they may destroy an attacking missile at the earliest possible moment.

4. Political effects of the Rapacki plan

7. Not only would the Rapacki proposal itself not involve any change in the status quo in Central Europe (i.e. the division of Germany, and Soviet control of the European satellites), which are the main causes of tension dividing the free world and the Communist world, but, for the military reasons stated above, the Rapacki arrangements, by modifying the basic power situation in favour of the Russians, would make even less likely the settlement of these political issues on a fair and just basis. The overall objective of the West to attain a just peace would thus be hindered, not helped, by our acceptance of the Rapacki Plan.

8. The Federal Republic of Germany would be placed in a special and exceptional position. It would no longer participate as an equal member of N. A. T. O., because it would not be sharing equally in the obligations of NATO membership. Such a situation would create a favourable political and psychological atmosphere for those circles in Germany which wish to weaken the ties between Germany and the Western world. It would lead to increased neutralist tendencies among the German people and could thus well be an initial step towards German withdrawal from N. A. T. O. Germany would then be left militarily weak and neutralised, close to the overwhelming power of the Soviet Union. Such a situation would be as intolerable for the German nation as for the whole free world.

9. Because the Rapacki Plan does not hold out even modest advantages for the West, there is no point in considering whether such a Plan could in fact be enforced through an efficient system of control and inspection. There is the ever present doubt as to whether the Soviet Union will respect the written word. Long and bitter experience has proved that guarantees of non-aggression by the Soviet Union have never prevented the Soviet Army from attacking.

5. The disengagement concept

10. It is difficult to see how any form of disengagement in Central Europe could provide real security for the West. It would place us in a position where we would be tragically weakened and gain nothing in return. By its nature it again means pulling forces out of Germany, which in turn means that the bulk of United States and United Kingdom forces would return to their homelands, thereby reducing the ability of the West to defend Western Europe.

11. It can be shown by historical example that the creation of a vacuum between two major opponents often increases the danger of hostilities. Given the fact of a divided Germany, the geographical isolation of Berlin, surrounded as it is by Soviet satellite territory, and the politically sensitive situation in the Eastern European satellites, it would be tempting fate to agree to any form of disengagement. A military withdrawal of NATO troops from Western Germany and of Russian troops from Central and Eastern Europe, would constitute a mortal danger for the West if it were not to be accompanied by:

- a. the political withdrawal of the Soviet Union from the now occupied part of Europe, and
- b. a thoroughly controlled and inspected general agreement on disarmament between East and West.

12. As technology develops it results in ever greater speeds of missiles, etc. This, in turn, increases the advantage to the aggressor of a surprise attack. Any scheme of disengagement which would deny the West the use of the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany for its defensive forces, would reduce the warning time that the West would have. A reduced warning time would mean that the West would have less time to react and defend itself. In effect this would mean that a prospective enemy could get closer to us without being molested.

13. Geographical considerations mean that the denial to the West of the area of the Federal Republic of Germany would compel the West to deploy such forces as could be mustered in the relatively narrow land area between the Western borders of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Atlantic Ocean (Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg and France), which would mean that in terms of a missile or rocket attack the period of time we of the West would have to react to such a surprise attack would be negligible. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, with its tremendous land area, could deploy its forces in such a way as to obtain maximum protection from our efforts to counter the initial Soviet attack.

14. The creation of a demilitarised zone would deny to the West information on the activities of the possible aggressor, and, since chances of destroying missiles or rockets before they reach their target are increased in relationship to the amount of warning, it would be of considerable use to a prospective enemy to reduce as far as possible such a period of warning.

15. All the disengagement ideas are based on the more or less clearly stated principle that a neutral belt should be created in the heart of Europe, that Germany should be reunified and that this reunified Germany should be neutralised. But is it possible to neutralise an energetic and highly developed nation of 70 million souls? The free world has no desire to impose such a fate on the German nation. The time is past when the Soviet Union could try to divide and rule Europe by speculating on anti-German feelings in Western Europe. Neutralisation of a reunified Germany would have to be dictated by the free world and the Soviet Union together. There is no inclination in the West to behave like that towards our German allies. For this reason disengagement proposals must be considered as politically unsound.

6. Conclusion

Although the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe asked for an opinion only on the military implications of limited disarmament and of the policy of disengagement, it was inevitable that certain political aspects of these problems would also be touched upon, because they are so very closely linked that it is impossible to study the military implications in isolation.

From the foregoing considerations, which are mainly of a military, but also of a political, nature, it would seem that the Assembly of Western European Union has many objections to the Rapacki Plan and disengagement and does not see any advantages which could overcome these objections. It is useless to try to improve the Rapacki Plan by amendments in such a way that it could also become a valuable startingpoint for negotiations for the West. This Plan is a Soviet trap—we must not fall into it.