

17th January, 1967

There is rather a substantial difference between the terms of reference for the new exercise and the terms of reference set forth for the Three Wise Men. For the former, the terms were "To advise the Council on ways and means to improve and extend NATO co-operation in non-military fields and to develop greater unity within the Atlantic Community". For the latter, "The Council should undertake the study of the future tasks which face the Alliance and its procedures for fulfilling them in order to strengthen the Alliance as a factor for a durable peace". The wording of this recent resolution does not seem to me to be quite logical because if the object of the exercise is to study the future tasks of the Alliance, then we cannot anticipate that we have to strengthen the Alliance - which is in itself a task. But this is rather Byzantine and I would go no further.

Starting from the procedure, it seems to me that there are many reasons for entrusting the study to an open-ended committee of experts, possibly under the chairmanship of the Secretary General, and certainly with the help and active participation of the Secretariat. In this way we may avoid the rather undignified struggle to participate, which has too often been a feature of this kind of exercise. We would avoid giving the impression that some countries were deliberately left out, and we would avoid having either a group formed by the major powers or a group formed by the medium or small powers. In my opinion, both would present shortcomings. If one chooses a restricted group of the larger powers, there are complaints about the directorate; if one chooses a small group of small powers, you will have them either not reflecting the main trends of the Council or acting as a mouthpiece of the major powers without the latter taking any direct responsibility. And once a report is prepared, it is very difficult to alter it substantially.

Thus, in my opinion, I would advise having an open-ended committee of a high political level which, from time to time, would have meetings with the Council. After all,

one cannot divorce the Council completely from this vital work, which is much more of a political nature than an organizational one. Otherwise the political focus of the Alliance in the months to come would be concentrated exclusively on another body altogether. This would also be the best way to ensure the participation of the Secretary General and of the International Secretariat.

May I parenthetically express my deep distaste for all public procedures in which there are delicate matters of policy to be discussed. In democratic societies foreign policy aims cannot be concealed from public opinion, but their elaboration should not be a matter for the public. A sound foreign policy rests on appreciation of developments which are not likely to be appreciated by the average public opinion and a pessimistic outlook runs contrary to the prevailing mood of wishful thinking of our societies. Certainly we cannot conceal the fact that this exercise is being carried out (it was in the communiqué), but I would not publicise it too much in order to avoid raising great expectations. If the result is good, there will be ample time for a wide diffusion.

Coming to the substantive items of the exercise, I think that the main points to be analysed are the following.

(1) A thorough analysis of the foreseeable balance of power between the nuclear countries: the likely impact of the possible development of ABMs; the foreseeable nuclear progress of China and of other nuclear countries; the likelihood of non-nuclear countries getting nuclear and the influence of this development on the world situation, etc. etc.

(2) A thorough analysis of the foreseeable Soviet political aims and of the factors which affect them. Better relations with Western powers are nothing new in Soviet history and they materialise when political expediency so suggests. There was a certain kind of detente in the NEP period, and then again when the Nazi threat became apparent. Now there is the Chinese threat and parallel with that, there is certainly a more promising development inside Russian society. It may be that the Chinese threat makes the Soviet Union completely East-ward looking and that the internal

changes may be regarded as a permanent, positive factor.

(3) Even if this appraisal is correct, it does not follow that we may just write down every political clash of interest with the Soviet Union. This seems to me to be a rather important point because too much was said in the past about the 100 or so Soviet divisions ready to march towards Western Europe and too little of the necessity to check a less militantly aggressive power in the normal play of the balance of power.

Our relations with the USSR were seen from the angle of the actual military threat, but even if we assume that the actual military threat is greatly diminished, the need for an Alliance remains because if we maintain that it is of common interest to the Western powers to have a sound solution of the German problem, without which Europe can have neither stability nor strength, here is a clash of interest with the Soviet Union. Furthermore, without being unduly dogmatic, we cannot completely forget that the economic systems and basic philosophies of Eastern and Western Europe are greatly different.

If then the Chinese threat is irreversible and if we have still a clash of interests, even a less dramatic one, with the Soviet Union, it seems to me that it follows that our Alliance is very necessary indeed, and that we may take advantage of the Soviet difficulties in order to pursue our own political aims, although certainly not beyond the point which would unduly antagonise the USSR. (Unfortunately, it seems that many think that we should court the Russians, while perhaps the better appreciation would show that it is more likely that it is in their interest for them to court us.)

This seems to me to be the crux of the matter; in trying to have better relations with the Soviet Union we must avoid two dangers. One is that, mesmerised by the Vietnam war, we sacrifice basic interests in Europe in order to *hope* to obtain some help from Moscow for a pacific settlement in Vietnam; or that some of us may take advantage of the present situation to try to reach some understanding with the USSR at the expense of European interests.

Thus, in my opinion, the main task of NATO should be

found in the search for a common approach to the diplomatic exchanges which will take place on essentials with the Russians. I am well aware that this runs counter to the main French ideas, but, as I said, an alliance should, by its very nature, try to achieve political aims and not be regarded as an insurance policy for the worst case. The fact that in order not to be kept unprepared technical preparations are essential in the military field must not obscure this simple fact and make us think that ours is an association of countries with no obligation to consult and co-ordinate policies on matters of common interest.

Again, I know this is not the French point of view; but while this fact might have been a good reason for not starting the exercise, once this has been decided, I do not see how to avoid this difficulty.

These notes do not consider the particular European character the exercise should have in the Belgian mind. But is it necessary to discuss the European aspects separately? They follow naturally from the discussion of the points listed above. For instance, the very fact that the United States are now so deeply concerned with Vietnam should be a powerful lever to increase the political union of Western Europe, if we assume that there is a general will to increase our strength vis-a-vis the Soviet Union - a very obvious way, inter alia, to make attractive to the Soviets some political understanding with the West.