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RA - Mr. Fessenden

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RA - John Y. Millar

NATO Military Concept

I had a conversation this week with a friend in the Pentagon which might be of interest to you in connection with the subject we have discussed several times: the validity of the Sword and Shield concept. Incidentally, my friend should be in a very good position to know what U.S. thinking is.

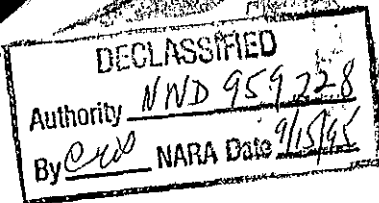
He, like I, thought that it would be impractical for us to use our nuclear deterrent because of the damage the other side would inflict on us. He said he would like to go out to Sandia and be brought up to date on the effects of nuclear weapons, because his knowledge was somewhat old. I told him that I had heard the Sandia people talk in the Pentagon and perhaps for that reason I had a more pessimistic idea than he of what would happen to the U.S. if the Soviets attacked us. We both agreed, however, that the U.S. had to maintain a deterrent strong enough to destroy the Soviets if called upon, even though we could never use it. The other part of the requirement was to have as much limited war power as we could afford, after providing for the deterrent. He said that in fact that is the present U.S. policy.

He mentioned that the British are operating on somewhat the same philosophy, except that they are now apparently going to place less emphasis on the deterrent and leave that department more to us, while concentrating on limited war forces.

He said he thought we had to give the Soviets and our NATO allies the feeling that we would use the deterrent if the Soviets started anything in Europe, since that was the way to keep them from doing so. Nevertheless, while he was fully aware of the current NATO doctrine that nuclear weapons will be used from the outset, he thought that if something happened in Europe we would not immediately use nuclear weapons in response. He foresaw a period of hard conventional warfare while the politicians talked. He recognized that Soviet superior forces would mean that we would be pushed back. He also foresaw that in a fairly short time we would probably be forced to use small atomic weapons in order to balance off the Soviet advantage of numbers. He thought that before we used tactical atomic weapons the President would make a statement explaining that we did not plan at that time to use the big weapons to attack the USSR. He pointed out that it would be difficult to use even small atomic weapons in such a conflict in Europe since there are very few areas where we could shoot them off without killing numbers of friendly civilians. If we used small atomic weapons he thought

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that the other side might easily mistake the explosions for those of larger weapons and hence we would risk all-out war through error. Following the thought along he saw that the Soviets would then use small nuclear weapons in retaliation and that we would be in danger of losing the struggle. At this point only, he thought, the President would declare that we would have to use the Sword. He was of the opinion that we could weather the severe destruction we would receive and go on to win, although from what I understand from the Sandia people that does not seem likely.

That sums up the situation in Europe as he would see it developing.

We both agreed that the atomic stalemate, described by him as two scorpions in a bottle, made the likelihood of a big war less and the possibility of limited war relatively greater. He agreed from what we saw at Fort Bragg that STRAC would not be able to get anywhere by air in sufficient numbers to do much good. His final explanation for continuing to stand by the current doctrine of nuclear deterrent or Sword and Shield is that this is the only concept we can afford to support: it would cost too much to support ground forces on a scale big enough to successfully combat the Soviets using only conventional weapons. Nevertheless, as just outlined, the outcome of any conflict in Europe under ^{the} present concept would appear to be defeat, if we do not use our strategic forces, or annihilation, if we do. As Soviet IRBM and ICBM missile strength increases this unfavorable prospect would seem to be enhanced.

I hope you have an answer to show that the foregoing is all wrong.

cc: RA - Mr. Magill

EUR:RA:JYMiller:bpw

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