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Statement

made by Herr K. S c h ü t z,

State Secretary of the German Foreign Office,  
before the North Atlantic Council on 15 February 1967

Mr. Chairman,

The decision taken by the Ministerial Meeting on 16 December 1966 which is the subject of our discussion today gives us an opportunity to proceed to a thorough stock-taking of the Alliance, to define its future tasks and possibilities and to see how the Alliance can be adapted to these tasks. I should like to thank the Belgian Foreign Minister, M. Harmel, for having taken the initiative for this useful and necessary work.

As our deliberations will extend over the whole year and the final report is not to be submitted until the end of this year, our meeting today is only of an introductory and preparatory nature. It will obviously be our first task to agree on the subjects of the studies which are to be carried out in implementation of the ministerial decision as well as on the procedure to be applied. Both the British Delegation and the Secretary General have already submitted proposals to this end and have thus done extremely useful preparatory work for this meeting.

Before I make some observations on these proposals and suggest some subjects which should be studied in the opinion of the German government, I should like to emphasize the preliminary character of the considerations I am going to offer. Only in the course of the studies will it be possible to see which subjects will have to be studied in detail. It will therefore probably be neither necessary nor advisable to draw up a very detailed list of our subjects. In particular, it does not appear advisable to me to place the studies on such a broad basis that they comprise all aspects of the aspects of the activities of the Alliance. Rather, I feel that we should confine ourselves to the most important and most urgent subjects.

The following conclusions emerge from these general observations:

(1) While I am in full agreement with Minister Thomson's remarks, it does not appear advisable to us to deal within the framework of these studies with military questions coming under the terms of reference of the Defence Planning Committee and other NATO Committees, for example the bodies responsible for cooperation in the field of armaments production. We should concentrate ourselves on political problems and not deal with questions of force planning and strategy with which the Defence Planning Committee is dealing and which are primarily a responsibility of our defence ministers.

(2) In identifying the political subjects we should concentrate our attention on those questions which directly concern the treaty area of the Alliance and which are - or may be in future - of decisive importance for East-West relations. Let me make it quite clear that, in the opinion of my government, a bloc-to-bloc approach is neither advisable nor feasible and that it will be a matter for the individual NATO countries to make use of the results of the joint analysis in their national foreign policy. As it will be known, the present German government has a policy of its own in this respect.

(3) We should not enter into a discussion of day-to-day political events which are or should in any case be the subject of political consultation in NATO. We should rather look ahead and deal with the problems and tasks in the years to come.

(4) We agree with your view, Mr. Chairman, that it might be useful to carry out the studies in two phases. I believe that it might be useful if we analysed first of all the situation and political tasks of the Alliance. This might be done in the period between now and the June conference. In a second phase, we may try to draw the conclusions from these analyses and examine their effects on the Alliance.

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Proceeding from these general observations, it appears to me that the following subjects should be examined, in the following order:

(1) The present and anticipated future political objectives and the strategy of the Soviet Union.

The study of this subject which is, in substance, identical with the first subject proposed by the Secretary General, seems to me to provide a basis for all further studies which will be carried out in implementation of the decision taken by Ministers on 16 December 1966.

By the way, the future policies of NATO countries are also bound to have repercussions on the policy of the Soviet Union. I think that the study of this subject need not take too much time, taking into account that valuable studies have already been undertaken previously.

(2) The field of European security with special reference to the possibilities of a gradual and balanced revision in force levels on both sides of the demarcation line.

This subject, which has, in substance, also been proposed by you, Mr. Chairman, and which follows on an idea which has been reflected in the Final Communiqué of the Ministerial meeting in December 1966, should comprise all those problems which must be solved in order to arrive at a lasting peaceful order. Of special and topical importance is, in our view, the question of a balanced revision of force levels on both sides of the demarcation line which is closely related to the question of the American and British forces stationed in Germany.

(3) The meaning of "détente" and the maintenance of the military balance between East and West as a necessary prerequisite to a successful "détente"-policy.

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(4) Conclusions to be drawn from the studies referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 above for the tasks and organization of the Alliance.

I should like to include in this subject all those problems which, according to your proposal, Mr. Chairman, should be examined in the second phase of the studies. A particularly important aspect concerns the question which special rôle the European NATO partners can play within the Atlantic Alliance. This subject should also include other questions affecting the structure and the organization of the Alliance as well as the procedures of political cooperation. In our opinion these questions should be examined at the end and not at the beginning of our work.

These suggestions for subjects to be studied which - as I said before - represent only preliminary considerations of the German government need not necessarily mean that we intend to restrict the studies to these three subjects.

As far as the procedure is concerned, the proposal made by our Chairman, the Secretary General, appears acceptable to us. However, it should be decided from case to case which rank the national representatives in the working groups established to deal with the various subjects should have.

I think it is in line with this proposal and with the remarks of Minister Harmel to submit the following practical suggestion for your consideration: Why don't we ask APAG to serve as our instrument for this purpose - and to report from time to time to the Council, if possible, in the presence of state secretaries or other high-ranking officials from capitals? In our case, this would be the ideal solution. APAG members are closely familiar with the views of their governments. They can be made available more easily than other high officials. They are accustomed to similar problems and tasks. Their scheduled discussions can be postponed for a while.

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Mr. Chairman, Gentlemen, the North Atlantic Alliance which, as our government's declaration of 13 December 1966 said, we are anxious to see consolidated and developed in keeping with present-day requirements, is today as in the past, the basis for the freedom and well-being of our peoples. This is the conviction also of the new German government and will, I believe, be the main conclusion which we shall draw from our deliberations.