



N A T O ———— O T A N

SERVICE DE PRESSE

PRESS SERVICE

OTAN/NATO, 1110 Bruxelles • Telephones: 241 00 40 - 241 44 00 - 241 44 90 TELEX: 23-067

"NATO AND EUROPEAN SECURITY"

ADDRESS BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF NATO

THE RT. HON. THE LORD CARRINGTON

to the

KRING VOOR INTERNATIONALE BETREKKINGEN

of the

KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITET LEUVEN

Leuven, 13th February, 1985

REGISTRY P.A.
BUREAU I.270

INTERIEUR

77
FEB 85
32469
020700

• 1-SPEN 1-SPFR

It is both an honour and pleasure for me to come to the Catholic University of Louvain, one of the oldest establishments of higher learning in Europe, to address the Circle for International Relations on the eve of its 40th Anniversary: an important milestone in a distinguished history.

You are shortly to hold an international symposium, to mark that anniversary, on the subject of "The Future of European Security within the NATO Framework". It was suggested to me that I should speak on much the same subject; but it was not made clear whether this was intended to provide a curtain raiser to your discussions next month or an example of what needs putting right. Be that as it may, I should like to recall briefly some of the fundamental premises on which European security rests.

The basic starting point is that NATO was founded with the specific purpose of responding to a direct threat to the security of Western Europe. North America was under no such threat at the time, and came to face one only when the Soviet Union developed an intercontinental missile capability of its own. But both before and after this crucial watershed, the United States and Canada showed themselves ready to maintain the commitment they had willingly made twice before in this century. A commitment, in men as well as in materiel, to protect the values and interests they shared with so many of the states of Europe.

That commitment was not, of course, made for purely altruistic reasons. There was from the start a keen appreciation that the world was too small to permit North America the luxury of indifference to the fate of Europe.

For their part, the Western Europeans, thoroughly alarmed at the course of events in Eastern Europe and the pressure on Berlin, were in no doubt that they were simply not strong enough politically, economically or militarily to face the threat alone.

The birth of the Atlantic Alliance thus arose from a shared realisation that the threat to Western Europe was so great, that it could only be met by a partnership between Europe and North America. A partnership in which a united political will to resist the threat of aggression was supported by the military means to do so.

Thirty five years later, the continuing validity of that assessment is now the subject of some questioning on both sides of the Atlantic. The sceptics fall broadly into two camps: those who doubt whether a threat to Europe still exists; and those who look at Western Europe's economic and political self-assurance and suggest that the "American connection" could and should be sharply reduced, if not abandoned altogether.

To take the last point first, there seem to me to be a number of sound reasons why the concept of transatlantic interdependence has lost none of its force. Whatever terms we use to define the Western system - and the right to disagree, and to

change ideas and governments according to the will of the majority, lie at the heart of it - it has proved remarkably strong and resilient in the face of pressures from the outside and from within. But that strength and resilience did not come without effort. The health of the democratic system in one country cannot be divorced from its survival in others. In a world which is now smaller than ever, an attack on our values in one country tends to undermine them also in others.

And there is no doubt that the Soviet Union, because of its ideology and its massive military strength, poses at least a potential threat to those values. A threat which need not prevail - I do not believe in the inevitability of history, and I certainly do not believe in the inevitability of totalitarian rule. But a threat which has to be taken seriously if we are to continue to keep it in check.

There are those who accept that, but who would nevertheless argue that Western Europe is now strong and wealthy enough to be able to look after itself. To be sure, there is room for the European Allies to play a greater role and I shall revert to this later. But for them to take on the entire burden of providing the counterweight to Soviet military power in Europe, would require a massive reordering of expenditure and redirection of human effort: on a scale which could hardly be envisaged in peacetime without radical change in the nature of our society.

I cannot imagine that those in North America who would like Western Europe to play a bigger role in its defence would welcome consequential changes of the kind I have suggested; particularly if the Soviet Union as well it might, were to respond to greatly increased Western European defence efforts by building up its own forces still further. That would be a recipe for higher tension on a global scale. It would work against the objective of preventing a third world war which is what NATO is all about; and which remains very much a North American as well as a Western European interest.

Which is not to say that North Americans and Europeans necessarily share the same perceptions of how that common interest should be promoted. It would be astonishing if they did, given the great differences of geography, history, economy and culture. The United States, by virtue of the sheer scope of its own interests and commitments, is concerned with the Soviet Union on a global scale: to take one obvious example, it is a Pacific as well as an Atlantic power.

The European focus is narrower. And we are more conscious of a common European heritage, albeit one which has been overlaid by division and suspicion, not to say hostility. That division, and the manner in which it came about, has led to the continent of Europe becoming the arena for the largest concentration of military might the world has ever witnessed. It is not always easy for North Americans to understand the combined effect of these factors on European perceptions; just as it is not always easy for Europeans to understand the wider preoccupations of the United States. The right answer in my view is to accept that differences of perception will not go away and to devise a strategy which caters for both the European and the American preoccupations.

That strategy must, however, be based on a very similar assessment of the broad lines of Soviet policy. A subject on which, to put it mildly, there are differences of view in the Western World - in North America as well as in Western Europe.

One school of thought has it that the Soviet Union has changed significantly in the last two decades, its leaders having recognised that the world political and military balance of forces is no longer moving inexorably in their favour. The former revolutionary fervour has, it is said, given way to a realisation that any major conflict would inevitably bring enormous and unacceptable damage to the Soviet Union. According to this line of reasoning the Soviet leaders, who are cautious men, can be relied upon not to invade Western Europe; and the fact that the Soviet Union continues to maintain such a high level of armed forces can be attributed to genuine worries about being surrounded by hostile or potentially hostile powers.

Against this, there are those who believe that the Soviet Union regards the accumulation of military power as the real yardstick of international influence; that for historical and ideological reasons it does indeed see pressure and threats from every quarter; and that it is therefore prompted to define its security interests in terms so broad as to leave no room for the legitimate security interests of others. Those who see things in this way point to the fact that Soviet doctrine teaches that conflict between the two main socio-political systems is inevitable; that, while such conflict need not necessarily be armed, it is wise to proceed on the assumption that it might become so; and that it is the responsibility of the Soviet leadership to push the wheel of history in the direction of communism wherever and whenever they get the chance. Seen in this light, the Soviet Union has only itself to blame if it is indeed surrounded by hostile powers.

There are members of each of these opposing schools of thought who would claim a monopoly of truth about the fundamental nature of the Soviet system. But if there is one thing I have learned about the Soviet Union, it is that we can never be sure that our interpretation of its actions, its motivations and its goals is correct. Winston Churchill's description of that country as an enigma wrapped in a mystery may have undergone some modification in the past 40 years; but there is still much that we do not understand well enough.

So, what conclusions should we draw about the threat to Western Europe? Should we believe Soviet leaders when they say that they want to live in peace with us? And are we sure that we know quite what it is that they mean by "peace"? In the Leninist definition of the word, there is more than a hint of conditionality: that true peace can only be a socialist peace.

These are not easy questions. We cannot, of course, abandon the search for a sensible assessment of Soviet intentions just because it is difficult to get reliable evidence. But these imponderables can reasonably lead us to place considerable weight on what we can count and measure with accuracy: the scale of the

Soviet military effort and the constant improvement of Soviet military capabilities. However much we may try to out-guess one another as to why the Soviet leaders have been prepared to pay the economic and social costs of amassing such a massive military machine, the numbers speak for themselves with a certain eloquence.

We can, therefore, reasonably place the burden of proof on those who claim that the Soviet Union has no intention of ever using its considerable military superiority against Western Europe, whether by outright invasion or by some more subtle means of pressure. Can they demonstrate that it would be safe to leave that military power unchecked? If they cannot do so, then common prudence would suggest that we should keep our insurance policy up-to-date.

And that is what NATO forces - both conventional and nuclear - are designed to do. They have no other purpose than to deter a potential enemy from attacking us, and to defend us against such an attack should deterrence fail. We have made it clear at the highest political level that we shall never use any of our weapons except in response to attack; and that remains the corner-stone of the policy of the Alliance.

Our purpose is to prevent war of any kind, whether nuclear or conventional. It sometimes seems to me that, in the very understandable debate about nuclear weapons and their terrible destructive power, the horrors of conventional war are overlooked. Those in this audience who share with me bitter and painful memories of the last war, in which the city of Louvain suffered its part of damage and destruction, will share also my determination that it should never be allowed to happen again.

So the primary task of NATO in seeking to strengthen European security must be to prevent the East-West force relationship from getting so far out of balance that the risk of war, or of political exploitation of superior strength, becomes very real. To do this, we need both to look to our conventional defences and to do what is necessary to ensure an acceptable measure of nuclear stability.

The European Allies have a vital part to play in both endeavours. The United States' nuclear umbrella remains necessary as a deterrent against conventional as well as nuclear attack; and it remains necessary also that the European Allies should contribute to deterrence as well as to defence. It is after all, the security of Western Europe which is at stake.

As far as conventional forces are concerned, Western Europe does rather better than some in the US Congress appear to believe. But we all need to do more - not least to avoid a greater degree of dependence on nuclear weapons than any of us would consciously choose; and I am glad to say that work on some necessary improvements is already in hand.

The question of the nuclear element in NATO's deterrence and defence strategy is more controversial, and there are many who would like to reduce or even eliminate it. Most of the suggestions made fall into one of two categories: either what is called non-nuclear defence, or a renunciation of the option to be the first to use nuclear weapons in response to attack.

To the advocates of non-nuclear defence for the Alliance as a whole, I would ask how the Western Allies, having abandoned nuclear weapons, would be expected to cope with a Soviet Union which had not? Major strengthening of conventional defences is neither a cheap answer, nor a complete one, as the West would remain open to nuclear blackmail. Why should a Soviet Union with a nuclear monopoly commit itself to conventional warfare when it could threaten with impunity a devastating nuclear strike? And what would the advocates of non-nuclear defence do if such a threat were made?

If, on the other hand, the idea is that Western Europe should become non-nuclear, leaving the United States to provide the nuclear umbrella, some different questions must be answered. Is this, first of all, a satisfactory position from the point of view of morality? And, more practically, could we be confident that the American people would accept such a burden; and even if they did, could we be sure that anything short of an attack on the United States itself would be deterred?

Frankly, I do not know the answers. No-one does. But I should be most uncomfortable if I were obliged to rely on a strategy which left open so many vital questions, and which took so much for granted.

European security since the war has been preserved by a strategy which encompasses both conventional and nuclear elements, and which relies on maintaining a close connection between the security of Western Europe and the security of North America. Anything which tends to weaken that connection will weaken European security; and that, as it seems to me, is one of the cardinal points about the deployment of CRUISE and PERSHING II missiles in Western Europe.

There are those who would accept much of this line of reasoning but who would nonetheless have NATO undertake not to be the first to use its nuclear weapons. I accept that such a policy would preserve a deterrent against nuclear attack or nuclear blackmail. But I question whether it would serve to deter a conventional attack. To give such a pledge would be to make it far easier for a potential aggressor to calculate the probable costs of aggression, and might lead him to conclude that they were worth the risk. It is the crucial element of incalculability which is the essence of deterrence, and I feel much more secure with it in place. A sense of security, incidentally, which is not in any way at the expense of the Soviet Union; because, as I have said, the West will not use any of its weapons except in response to attack.

I have dwelt so far on NATO's military strategy for safeguarding European security. But that, of course, is only one side of the coin. The other, equally important, is the political strategy. It is not enough to be able to deter aggression: we must work to improve the quality of the peace; to reduce suspicions which can feed on themselves and fuel a progression from tension to crisis; and, not least, to mitigate the division of Europe.

Of all the many strands which go to make up that political strategy, arms control and disarmament negotiations are central: not as an alternative to security policy, but as an integral part of it. We will not gamble with our security, any more than we expect the Soviet leaders to gamble with theirs; but we would very much like to see that security reliably ensured at a much lower level of arms and armed forces.

It follows that there are a number of criteria which should be applied - and applied rigorously - when we look at proposals for arms control and disarmament. First, agreements should be specific and militarily significant. There is very little point - and possibly some danger - in concluding agreements which may sound impressive, but which leave the levels of manpower and weapons largely untouched, or even free to increase. Second, they should be fair and balanced. Third, they should provide adequate assurance that obligations voluntarily undertaken will be respected. In other words, they should be verifiable: history offers too many examples of disarmament agreements which relied for their effectiveness on nothing more than the goodwill of the parties involved; and which did nothing to make the world a safer place.

In short, there are no easy answers or safe short cuts in arms control. This may not be much comfort to those who see negotiations dragging on for years and become frustrated and impatient with the lack of results. But it would be still less comforting to find ourselves with results which we came to regret.

It will be important for all of us to bear that in mind when the new negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union get under way. The agreement to start talking again is a cause for great satisfaction. But the fact that the Soviet Union has responded to the constructive diplomacy of the United States, and to the solidarity shown by Allied governments in sticking to their decision on intermediate range nuclear missiles, should not blind us to the difficulties ahead. The substance of the negotiations is hideously complex, as the INF and START talks have already shown. And the space basket is unlikely to prove simpler.

These difficulties will take patience to overcome, and I hope that we will all draw the necessary conclusions. Impatience and unrequited concessions will only play into the hands of those in Moscow who may hope to get what they want from the West without the need for serious negotiation; and INF deployment is very relevant in this context also.

Allied solidarity will be crucial to success in the negotiations on nuclear weapons and space in Geneva. And not only there. Wherever Western teams of negotiators face their Soviet and Eastern European counterparts, they will be at a disadvantage if they cannot count on solid political backing: in Vienna at the talks on mutual and balanced force reductions; at the Stockholm Conference on Confidence-Building Measures; and in Geneva again in the negotiations towards a global ban on chemical weapons. All these would bring tangible benefits for European security; all these are objectives which Western Europe and North America have worked together to define; and all these are objectives which they must work together to achieve.

Important as it is, arms control and disarmament is not the whole story of East-West relations; and we should beware of loading all our hopes on that one vehicle. If it reaches the end of the road successfully, it will do much to reduce suspicion and build confidence. But experience has shown that the road must be smoothed by many other forms of contact. And Europeans have an important role to play in all of them.

The European perception to which I referred earlier adds a valuable extra dimension to the East-West dialogue; and this is as true when the relationship between the superpowers is an active one as in periods when it is not. The message that we need to get home to the Soviet leaders is that we form an Alliance of equals, each enjoying the trust of its partners, and each with well-founded national points of view.

In the Western Alliance, diversity does not mean disharmony. But when we look at the states which make up the Warsaw Pact, we see a very different picture. The rules which govern its operation have the effect of suppressing diversity and imposing rigid conformity. I have no doubt which system is the better; and I suspect that there are many in Eastern Europe who would agree. Nobody likes to feel that he is a mere cog in a machine and that the governor will dictate his every movement.

Experience shows that there are strict limits to the ability of Eastern European governments to make an individual contribution to the political development of our divided continent. But experience shows too that they are not merely transmission belts to Moscow, and that dialogue should be encouraged on its merits. That is something which the Western European members of the Alliance are particularly well-placed to do. Our proximity to Eastern Europe, and our consciousness of a shared history, give us a special understanding of the problem; and, I hope, some ability to contribute to its constructive handling.

We cannot, of course, force our attentions upon Eastern Europe; and more than we can on the Soviet Union. And it must be for the countries of Eastern Europe to judge how far and how fast they can safely go without provoking a disapproving reaction from Moscow. Sometimes their judgement will be wrong, as we saw last year. But that should not discourage us from holding the door open; or on occasion from putting a toe in the door to stop it shutting.

If contacts between East and West, and more particularly between Eastern and Western Europe, offer opportunities to lower the barriers, we must accept that they also entail certain risks. One of the primary objectives of Soviet policy has always been to weaken the Atlantic partnership and to reduce, if not to eliminate, American interest and involvement in Europe. There will always be attempts to use contacts with the Western Europeans to sow the seeds of discord and to use European governments to put pressure on the United States.

This is a fact with which the Alliance has lived since its inception. And it is a fact which remains very much alive. The early stages of the public debate over intermediate range missiles provided a vivid example. And I would guess that the Soviet Union will now be doing its best to explore the divisive potential of what is loosely called Star Wars. Or perhaps not so loosely, because the phrase seems designed to convey the false impression that the Americans are proposing to put nuclear weapons into space.

These are risks, of which Western governments - and I hope Western public opinion - are well aware. Just as they are aware of the risk that the search for a greater European identity in the field of defence - an objective which I strongly support - could itself tend to divide the United States and Western Europe. But I am confident that the risks can and will be avoided; and that the idea of a greater European defence identity - which has been with us, in various guises, for a long time - can be successfully pursued. And it is important that it should be. No defence policy can work unless it has broad public support, and an increased knowledge of and interest in European defence issues is only to be welcomed. We need to make it clearer that NATO is an instrument of national policy, not the reverse; and that Europeans take their defence seriously.

So let us, by all means, see greater co-operation between the countries of Western Europe in the field of defence. And let us not forget that European security is something that we want not only for ourselves, but for all the people of this divided continent. But let us remember at the same time the foundations of the peace and prosperity which we enjoy today and which we want future generations to inherit. It is the transatlantic partnership which remains the essential foundation of the security of the West as a whole and of Western Europe in particular. Neither North America nor Western Europe can carry the burden alone. Together, we can ensure both that the burden is tolerable and that the peace will be maintained.