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"CHALLENGES TO THE ALLIANCE"

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CHALLENGES TO THE ALLIANCE

I am grateful for the opportunity to address the knowledgeable readers of "Europäische Wehrkunde" on some of the main issues and tasks of Alliance security policy.

In this year of anniversaries, which also marks the 30th anniversary of the accession of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Alliance, it is a fitting occasion to pay homage to the important contribution Germany had made to NATO - both in the area of defence and of policy formulation.

Germany's voice in the Alliance is a vital one. This is hardly surprising given the facts that the Federal Republic directly faces the Warsaw Pact military threat on a 1700 km frontier and that the ill-effects of the division of Germany and Europe are particularly felt there.

Anniversaries lend themselves to retrospection. But they also provide a focus for thinking of the future.

In my view there are three main tasks facing the Alliance: first, we must ensure the credibility of our deterrent and the strength of our conventional defences. Second, we must maintain the political cohesion on which they depend. Third, we need to develop a framework for conducting East-West relations which gives both sides confidence that their interests will be respected. For almost twenty years now - since the Harmel Report on the Future Tasks of the Alliance - the Allies have recognised that security cannot be achieved by military means alone. NATO is essentially a political organisation which must be politically and militarily strong if it is to maintain peace and improve its quality. Its political and military strategies must be pursued in parallel and kept in balance. That is the message that was confirmed by Allied Foreign Ministers in May 1984 in their Washington Statement on East-West Relations and that is the approach we need to maintain in the future.

Agreement on political principles and guidelines does not automatically translate into agreement on concrete action in specific circumstances. Effective implementation of both the political and the military strength of NATO's strategy requires a sustained effort.

The Alliance is at present in sound shape but that does not mean that we have no problems to face. Some of these problems stem from the fact that NATO has been as successful as it has been in maintaining peace and freedom over the past 36 years. This paradox can be explained: in all countries we have younger generations who have no personal memory of war, of the post-war years of crisis in which NATO was founded or even of the period of tensions which the Alliance had to face during its early years. As the teaching of history can never

adequately convey the atmosphere of danger and uncertainty in which these decisions were taken, there is a natural tendency to take for granted that peace and prosperity we enjoy. This generation gap is perhaps the most important of the challenges to our security policy. It renders difficult our task of achieving the broad political consensus needed for maintaining a credible deterrent and effective defence.

The Strategy of Flexible Response

To talk about broadening consensus inevitably leads to NATO strategy and more specifically to its nuclear element which remains a focus of controversy. As a result of intensified debate, we have witnessed a steady flow of proposals to abandon or modify the strategy of flexible response. Most of these suggestions fall into two categories: either what is called a non-nuclear defence or the renunciation of the option to be the first to use nuclear weapons in response to attack. If the proponents of non-nuclear defence want NATO as a whole to abandon nuclear weapons completely they would have to explain how to cope with the consequences of a massive shift of military power in favour of the Soviet Union. Increasing conventional defence would neither be a cheap nor a convincing answer, since no amount of conventional defence could protect the West from nuclear blackmail. Why should the Soviet Union with a nuclear monopoly commit itself to conventional warfare if it could threaten with impunity a devastating nuclear strike?

If the idea is rather that Western Europe or parts of it should become nuclear free zones leaving the burden of providing a nuclear umbrella to the US, the implications for the Alliance whose strength lies in partnership and sharing of burdens and risks would also be serious. With nuclear arms based only in the United States and on US ships, the deterrent would be much less credible for anything short of an attack on the United States. As targetting policy by its very nature is unverifiable, there is no way to guarantee that nuclear free zones would be respected in times of crisis or war.

As distinct from the unilateralists, there are those who argue that NATO, while retaining a nuclear capability, should pledge never to be the first to use nuclear weapons. Such a policy would have the merit of preserving the deterrent against nuclear blackmail or nuclear attack. But it would not preserve a nuclear deterrent against conventional attack. A potential aggressor would be relieved of the uncertainty he faces at present and would be invited to calculate that a conventional attack would only be met by conventional means. The result could only be an increase in the risk of conventional war. And it was conventional war which killed over 50 million people in the two World Wars and another 11 million more outside the NATO area since then. European security since the war has been preserved by a strategy which encompasses both conventional and the nuclear elements and maintains a close connection between the security of Western Europe and North America.

The aim of flexible response is to prevent a potential opponent from using any of his weapons in a political or military sense and to convince him that an attack on any NATO member would face him with an unacceptably high risk which would outweigh any possible gain. While an aggressor is certain that an

attack on the Alliance will be resisted militarily, he can never determine in advance when he would cross NATO's nuclear threshold. Even if he thinks NATO is unlikely to use nuclear weapons in particular circumstances, he can never be certain of it. Because of the terrible power of nuclear weapons, even the remote possibility of nuclear retaliation serves to deter.

Public debate has produced nothing which makes a convincing case for abandoning or changing the strategy of flexible response. What has been demonstrated instead is that NATO needs to implement its existing strategy more effectively.

The Soviet Union is a formidable nuclear and conventional power which is continuing to accumulate military strength beyond anything one would regard as necessary for defence. This massive military capability is linked to an ideology claiming not only that the wheel of history is turning in the direction of communism, but that it should be given a further push whenever the opportunity arises. Soviet leaders regard military power as the main yardstick of international influence and define Soviet security interests so extensive as to leave little room for legitimate security interests of others. Given what we know about the nature of the Soviet state and the forces which motivate its leadership we cannot afford to leave this military machine without effective counterweight.

In recent years NATO has achieved encouraging progress both in the nuclear and the conventional fields.

In the absence of a negotiated result the deployment of Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe continues on schedule. The Federal Parliament's "YES" in 1983 was crucial to NATO implementation of the 1979 dual-track decision, despite massive Soviet efforts to undermine public support and to shake the determination of the governments concerned.

In view of the steadily growing conventional imbalance in favour of the Warsaw Pact, we need to improve NATO's conventional defences if we are not to drift by neglect into a degree of dependence on nuclear weapons which no one would consciously choose. This is what Allied Defence Ministers had in mind when at their meetings of last December and May of this year they authorized a coherent effort to correct existing deficiencies. The Ministers approved the allocation of 3 billion Units of Account (1) for NATO's six year infrastructure programme (1985-90), a sum more than double the funding approved for the previous period. They also agreed to improve the stocks of key munitions and to implement further measures designed to enhance the Alliance's military sustainability. With active support of Allied capitals a good start has been made in correcting weaknesses and in developing a Conceptual Military Framework which is to provide nations with guidance for their long-term planning. Improving conventional defence is not only a question of spending more but also of using existing resources more effectively in terms of their output. Promoting arms co-operation and using emerging technologies are but two, albeit very important, examples. As a defensive Alliance we need not strive for numerical

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(1) Over 20 billion DM.

parity with the Warsaw Pact - tank for tank and airplane for airplane. But we need to ensure a capability for effective forward defence because we have no space to trade for time. Nowhere is this understood better than in the Federal Republic which makes enormous contributions to the common defence. The courageous decision of the Federal Government to lengthen the period of military service in order to counter adverse demographic trends and to maintain the strength of the Federal Armed Forces at a level necessary to fulfill its vital rôle as a mainstay of Allied defence in Central Europe is highly valuable and valued.

There are no easy or cheap solutions in keeping NATO strategy credible and effective. I am confident, however, that we shall succeed if we all pull together and maintain the momentum which has been generated.

Transatlantic Partnership

The Harmel Report rightly identified political solidarity as essential to the strength of the Alliance. Of course solidarity between all Allies is vital; but, first and foremost, the transatlantic partnership remains the foundation of the security of the West and of Western Europe in particular. Co-operation between Western Europe and North America has been key to the success of NATO since its inception and it will be just as important in the future. But this partnership cannot be taken for granted. West Europeans and North Americans do share fundamental values founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law which together with vital common interests constitute the basis of Alliance coherence. But they do not 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, economy and culture, as well as their different historical experience over the past decades.

We must accept that European and American perceptions have their own validity and we need to conceive a policy which embraces both.

Problems which cause difficulty to transatlantic relations require careful handling. The lessons we have learnt from the discussion of issues such as the Siberian pipeline, military activities outside the NATO area, burden sharing and, more recently, SDI are that quiet diplomacy is more effective than a public airing of differences, and that the closest possible consultation between Allies is the key to the successful handling of difficult questions.

Diversity in the Alliance does not mean disharmony. Differences of perception can be accommodated if they are explained and talked through. NATO provides the appropriate forum for this effort. Its consultation mechanisms play a vital role in the attempt to bridge an immense geographical range from Iceland to Sicily and from Eastern Turkey to the Pacific as well as a kaleidoscope of governments and opposition parties in sixteen countries. Seeking solutions to the problems which arise and managing constructively those differences which are not immediately susceptible to solution is also of major concern to the Secretary General. There are centrifugal as well as centripetal forces at work in the Alliance and we must be careful that the former do not get the upper hand.

A good example is the debate about the Strategic Defence Initiative which has been very much in the headlines of late and is likely to remain so. The SDI has a transatlantic as well as an East-West dimension and it is part of my job to ensure that European preoccupations are understood in the United States and vice-versa.

From an allied point of view, the most sensible approach to SDI, as it seems to me, is to keep the following points firmly in mind:

- in the light of Soviet capabilities and interest in this field, research by the United States within the constraints of the ABM Treaty, is both necessary and prudent;

- there should be a clear fire-break between research and any decision to proceed to development;

- it would be dangerous to do anything to undermine the technical and political underpinnings of our present strategy, which requires an effective nuclear deterrent, until we know what changes, if any, SDI is going to bring.

Until the outcome of SDI research is much clearer, it would be premature to reach conclusions of what might be possible technically, financially and politically. It is, however, important that there should be the closest possible consultations on matters which concern the security of the Alliance as a whole. Such consultations have had a good start and will continue. They contribute to the cohesion and confidence with which the Alliance faces the future.

East/West relations

After a difficult period, East/West relations are now entering a more active phase. Over the past year there has been a significant increase in the level and frequency of political contacts between Western leaders and their counterparts in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. We do not know today whether 1985, with the resumption of negotiations in Geneva and the accession of Mr. Gorbachev, will mark the beginning of a lasting turn for the better. What we do know, however, is that there is both scope and urgent need to seek common ground on which to build something of lasting benefit to both East and West.

This is true first of all for arms control and disarmament. It is in the Soviet, as well as in the Western interest, to seek a more stable relationship and to reduce the burden of military spending. The Soviet return to the negotiating table, which it should never have left, is a victory of common sense, with is largely due to the coherence of the Alliance in proceeding to deploy INF systems in the absence of a negotiated result and to the constructive diplomacy by the United States.

In close consultations with it's Allies, the United States has tabled proposals in Geneva calling for substantial reductions in the strategic nuclear arms of the United States and the Soviet Union and for the reduction of intermediate nuclear weapons to the lowest ceiling the Soviet Union will accept. The US is also ready for serious and detailed discussions of defensive

technologies in space: "The objective of the negotiations will be to work out effective agreements aimed at preventing an arms race in space and terminating it on earth, at limiting and reducing nuclear arms, and at strengthening strategic stability."

Satisfaction over this fresh start should, however, not conceal the fact that the subjects dealt with in Geneva are formidably complex and that progress will neither be quick nor easy to achieve. The strategic dialogue between the United States and the Soviet Union should not only be seen as a way of solving problems, but also of managing them until they can be solved.

The Vienna MBFR negotiations, which seek to reduce the military confrontation in Central Europe and the Stockholm Conference where the Allies are striving for practical measures to increase security and confidence in Europe are also key elements of this process.

Our arms control efforts are not limited to nuclear and conventional arms. In the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, the Allies are working for a complete ban on chemical weapons. Until such an agreement can be achieved, we can not disregard NATO security interests. While the United States ceased to produce chemical weapons in 1969 and their limited stocks are becoming obsolete, the Soviet Union has consistently been improving both the offensive and defensive chemical warfare capabilities of her forces. This is the background against which the United States is moving toward the production of binary agents.

Arms control and disarmament are an integral part of our security policy and not an alternative to it. If agreements are to enhance security they must be militarily significant, balanced and verifiable. There are too many examples of arms control agreements which relied in their effectiveness on nothing more than the goodwill of the partners involved and which consequently did nothing to make the world safer. Some were perhaps even harmful in that they served to lull public opinion in the democracies or, because of disputes over compliance, sharpened mistrust and ill-will.

The Soviet Union traditionally views disarmament in more than one dimension and works to a longer political timetable. She seeks to influence the outcome not only at the negotiating table itself but also tries to create and to exploit differences within the Alliance and to bring pressure for concessions through attempts to influence public and parliamentary opinion.

We will get nowhere in Geneva, Vienna or Stockholm if we do not show the necessary patience and determination and if we do not hold out for agreements which are both fair and reliable.

If the Soviet Union attempts to divide Alliance opinion on SDI by linking a cut in offensive nuclear arms to an unverifiable ban on research, it must be met with a firm "no".

The main point we need to get across at Geneva is that we want to achieve very substantial reductions in nuclear weapons and that prepared to negotiate constructively to that end. It is the Western side which in the INF

talks has proposed the total elimination of that category of weapons or their reduction to the lowest common ceiling the Soviet Union would be prepared to accept. And it is the Western side too which some time ago proposed a 33 per cent reduction of strategic nuclear weapons. That also seemed too radical for the Soviet Union at that time. But if the Soviet Union now really wants to negotiate deep reductions, then that is the sort of peaceful competition which we welcome. We shall be ready to play our part where it really counts which is at the Geneva negotiating table.

A challenge facing the Alliance is precisely the nature of the new Soviet leadership. In the person of Mr. Gorbachev, a forceful figure is at the helm for what is likely to be a long period office. Is too early to make a definitive assessment of Mr. Gorbachev. We shall need to make a hard, objective examination to see whether he brings anything new to Soviet foreign policies. So far there has been little new in substance. There is, however, a different style of presentation. We need to ensure that this does not work to our disadvantage and that the Alliance retains the initiative.

The conclusions Mr. Gorbachev will draw from his first experiences at the helm may have an important impact on his approach to East/West relations in the years to come. It will therefore be important that the West sends the right message to Moscow and does so with sufficient clarify and consistency to get it across. That message should be balanced and firm on the essentials: we must make it clear that we are ready to negotiate radical measures of disarmament in order to establish a security balance at a much lower level of arms and armed forces. But we must make it also plain that NATO will continue to ensure a sufficient counterweight in the form of nuclear and conventional strength and that we will not be pressured into agreements which put our security at risk. This is the only way to convince a new strong leader that productive negotiations with the West must be held in the negotiating room and that agreements must be based on fairness and reciprocity .

Arms control and disarmament can do much to enhance security, reduce distrust and build confidence, but it is neither the only objective nor the only measuring stick of the East/West relationship. In order to move to a more constructive phase of East/West relations, a broad range of bilateral and multilateral efforts will be needed.

The tenth anniversary of the Helsinki Act reminded us in the West of the need to pursue a common approach to the CSCE process for the implementation of the Final Act in all its parts.

The summit meeting between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev on November 19th to 21st could give fresh impetus to on-going arms control negotiations and to the East/West dialogue in general. But we cannot expect quick-fix solutions to complicated problems and should guard against burdening the meeting with exaggerated expectations.

The Atlantic Alliance has safely passed through a difficult period of East/West relations. It has done so by adhering to the main lines of a policy which makes clear our determination to maintain our defences and at the same time, to work for a more constructive relationship with the East. If we stick to this policy, there is no reason why we should not look to the future with confidence.