



UNITED KINGDOM PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
ON THE NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL
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19 January 1990

Charles Powell Esq
10 Downing Street
London SW1

Dear Charles,

THE FUTURE OF THE ALLIANCE, ETC

1. While I was in London the other day I learned that attendance at the follow-up to the September seminar at Chequers is going to be extremely restricted. I understand the reasons for this - even if I am something less than wholly content with the consequences!
2. "As it happens" I wrote a despatch at the beginning of the year covering, inter alia, the sort of issues likely to come up next week (and, I hope, with Mitterrand tomorrow). Since I will not be in a position to make the points orally and since the despatch will clearly not be added to (though it may, I suppose, be reflected in) the mass of paper departments will be submitting, I am taking the liberty of sending you a personal copy.
3. Given its scope, the despatch is inevitably very general. Some of it is in line with the Prime Minister's thinking, as I understand it, some of it less so. But either way it is, I trust, clear. It deliberately avoids architectural speculation: there is an understandable but somewhat escapist inclination around to engage in detailed futurology rather than in the less glamorous business of agreeing the bases on which we deal with the unpleasantnesses - as well as the opportunities - which the rest of this year seems certain to serve up.
3. No need to acknowledge.

Yours ever

Michael

Michael Alexander



*the pm
c/Breyn/alexander*

10 DOWNING STREET
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From the Private Secretary

23 January 1990

THE FUTURE OF THE ALLIANCE

Thank you for your letter of 19 January, covering your despatch on "The Revolution of 1989: How Should the Alliance Respond". I will ensure that the Prime Minister sees this in advance of any Ministerial discussion of these issues.

C. D. POWELL

Sir Michael Alexander, K.C.M.G.
PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL



(2)

Reminder

Michael Alexander's reflections on the future of the Alliance. They are set out at great length. But you need only read the summary: it says it all.

THE REVOLUTION OF 1989: HOW SHOULD THE ALLIANCE RESPOND?

SUMMARY

CDD
23/1

1. The Revolution of 1989 has launched Europe on a process of transition whose duration and outcome are unknowable. The prospective withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Eastern Europe radically changes the situation which the Alliance faces. The threat is diminishing but instability may grow.
2. We must avoid a return to a situation where Europe's states seek their security in shifting coalitions. Despite the challenges it faces, the Alliance meets an essential requirement: for an integrated, multinational security structure based in and on Western Europe. The same collective mechanism is needed to handle the Soviet Union (however it evolves), the out of area threat, and the spiralling costs of defence equipment. The European Community and the CSCE (the latter's deficiencies may be difficult to correct) will not be enough.
3. The transatlantic relationship is also evolving. As European reconciliation develops, the US presence in Europe will be reduced. The Europeans have no choice but to assume an increased responsibility for their own security. Careful handling will be required to ensure that the US strategic commitment is retained for as long as necessary.
4. A shift in the balance of responsibility within the Alliance from the Americans to the Europeans is the most important reform ahead. In a shorter time scale, increased emphasis on the Alliance's political dimension will have a higher profile. But NATO's military capability is the Alliance's raison d'être.
5. The Alliance's roles as a source of stability and as a framework for arms control in the process of transition are facilitated by the existence of the Warsaw Pact. If the Pact disintegrates in 1990, the potential for instability will grow. The complexities of the situation are greatly increased by the German rapprochement. This may well be consummated rapidly.
6. The implications for the Alliance are vast. The despatch suggests Alliance criteria for judging the issues. It proposes interim military objectives for the period of transition. While a pause after a CFE agreement might be desirable, it is improbable. A CFE II would be difficult to handle but could have substantial attractions.
7. It will not be easy to maintain Alliance consensus. But adherence to the principles which have sustained the Alliance for 40 years did much to make possible the 1989 Revolution. Their maintenance would do much to ensure that the Revolution's benefits were not lost in future.



UNITED KINGDOM PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
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4 January 1990

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd CBE MP
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Sir

THE REVOLUTION OF 1989: HOW SHOULD THE ALLIANCE RESPOND?

Introduction

1. Last summer I submitted to the then Secretary of State, Sir Geoffrey Howe, some thoughts on the challenges facing the North Atlantic Alliance. Those three linked despatches would in normal circumstances have more than exhausted my annual quota. But circumstances have not been normal. History offers few parallels to the speed and scale of the events which have convulsed Central and Eastern Europe since June. The drama has had its echoes at Evere. The last weeks of the decade saw not only the normal Ministerial meetings but (for the first time) a second Alliance Summit within a single year and (also for the first time) a visit to NATO by a Warsaw Pact Minister - Edward Shevardnadze of the Soviet Union. Since this Post's Annual Review is written in July, and since there will be many policy discussions and decisions before then, it may be useful to attempt a mid term assessment developing the earlier analysis and recommendations.

Background

2. Last month's Alliance meetings have been reported in telegrams of record and comment which need not be summarised here. It is for others to recapitulate and assess Eastern Europe's Revolution. It seems profitless to attempt detailed forecasts of future events - even a few weeks ahead. Many may have foreseen that the collapse of the Communist system in Eastern Europe was inevitable, would be progressive and might well be rapid. But no-one, so far as I am aware, came close to getting the timing or the character of the upheaval right. There are bound to be more surprises.

3. But in a despatch of this kind some assumptions have to be made. The basic point has not changed since June viz that "the accelerating crisis of Communism", taken together with other trends, means that the Alliance has to "begin to come to terms

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with the prospect of an inexorable transformation in the nature of the security relationship between the power blocs ..."
The status quo to which we had become accustomed has gone for good. The reform process will continue in one form or another. The de-ideologisation of inter state relations in Europe is irreversible. So is the progressive withdrawal of the Soviet presence, the weakening of Soviet influence in Central and Eastern Europe, and the consequent diminution of the perceived threat to the Alliance.

4. This is of historic and welcome significance. But the note of caution, even anxiety, apparent at recent NATO meetings needs to be repeated. As the excitement wanes in the former People's Republics, awareness will grow of the political drudgery, social hardship and economic uncertainty that lies ahead. The long term prospects may be good (hopefully the capital markets think so). But the ends to which it is now legitimate to aspire will be slow of realisation. Disappointment and disillusion may intervene - including with the West since our aid, however generous, seems bound to fall short of expectations. The ambitions of nascent political movements risk being distorted and scapegoats sought. (President Gorbachev has recently warned against the appeal of "national-populist" policies and pointed out that "nationalism thrives on poor living standards".) Instability may enhance the role of the military. Mr Gorbachev himself has ridden in the whirlwind for five years: the chances grow daily that he will also have to reap it - whether or not at the price of his office.

5. This is the setting in which the complex and potentially destabilizing processes of "unifying" Germany and dismantling Soviet control will take place. A certain scepticism about the chances of progressing smoothly through the early Nineties will do the Alliance no great damage. By contrast a Panglossian approach could cause a lot of harm.

The Response of the Alliance

6. Forecasting the Alliance's future course in detail would at present be little more profitable than doing so for Eastern Europe. No rigid game plan will last for long. Europe is embarked on a period of transition whose duration and outcome is unknowable. Of the issues to be resolved during this transition those for which the Alliance is responsible are in the last analysis the most important - since national security is the objective and precondition of the rest of any government's policy - but they are by no means the only ones. Other organisations, most obviously the European Community, are deeply involved: stabilising and then improving the economic situation in Eastern Europe is an essential objective. In this confused and interim period the requirement will be for tactical flexibility combined with clarity about basic principles and aims. We shall need guidelines against which the various policy options can be judged.



7. The questions which the Alliance has to answer have not changed all that much in substance since last summer. But they have been considerably sharpened. They can perhaps be grouped under six headings:

- (a) Is the requirement for the Alliance in question?
- (b) Are changes in the Alliance needed?
- (c) The relationship with the Warsaw Pact.
- (d) The German question.
- (e) The future military role of NATO.
- (f) Can consensus be maintained?

To do these issues full justice would require a book rather than a despatch. In what follows I have tried to concentrate on matters likely to be of direct concern to the Alliance in the next 12 months. I have raised longer term and more speculative points only in so far as they cast shadows in front of them.

The Requirement

8. With the simultaneous collapse of communism as a state ideology in Europe and of the Warsaw Pact as a war conducting organisation, the threat which occasioned the creation of the Alliance is declining rapidly. Will the resulting situation warrant the continued effort needed to sustain a multi-national treaty bound security organisation. If so, is a transatlantic dimension necessary?

9. It is, I hope, axiomatic that we must avoid reverting to a situation where the states of Europe, including the UK, seek their security in a shifting pattern of balancing coalitions. That this seems an implausible contingency at present is a measure of the extent to which we take the success of the Alliance for granted. But a resurgence of traditional patterns would look a good deal less improbable in a Europe from which stationed forces had disappeared; in which the influence of the Soviet Union and, more particularly, of the United States had greatly diminished while that of a single Germany had greatly increased; and in which Eastern Europe had once more been "balkanized". The risks inherent in such a scenario are obvious. The Romanian events have underlined, again, the potential for collective violence which exists in all our societies. Yugoslavia, Bulgaria or the Soviet Union next?

10. A Europe "whole and free" would, I presume, find its security in a form of integration similar to that which Western Europe has been developing under the umbrella of the Alliance.

/Thought



Thought is, rightly, being given to outline schemes. But they are, in all probability, years from realisation. In the interim care will be needed if we are to move towards rather than away from such objectives and if, indeed, we are not to jeopardize what has already been achieved. Given the many potential sources of friction, the infectious nature of instability and the devastating consequences of hostilities for our densely populated continent, there seems to me to be an absolute requirement to retain throughout the transition (and perhaps beyond) an integrated, multi-national security structure, such as the Alliance, based in as well as on Western Europe. Its role may become less clear cut. But even so it will continue to exercise a powerful restraining influence on other European powers (and on its own members). Without it the chances of either the European Community or the CSCE providing a basis for "European architecture" would look poor.

11. There are supporting arguments which do not, perhaps, need to be rehearsed in detail. Dealing with the Soviet Union will always require a collective approach from the countries of (Western) Europe. This will be true whether it remains a unitary state or whether - a more alarming prospect in the short term - it disintegrates. The out of area problem, however defined, will increase in the Nineties. The growing unit costs and diminishing production runs of defence equipment imply a more coherent European market, role specialisation etc. The further integration of the European Community implies the maintenance of a similar degree of mutual commitment in the defence field. (To keep open the option of future convergence between political and defence cooperation while developing forms of association between the Community and the states of Central and Eastern Europe will require careful coordination.)

12. The Transatlantic Dimension. Although there must be long term US involvement in Europe (eg through the CSCE), the requirement for a major US military presence in a fully reconciled Europe is not self evident. The (welcomed) stationing of hundreds of thousands of US servicemen in Western Europe, like that of their (unwelcomed) Soviet equivalents in Eastern Europe, has always been, in the historical sense, an anomaly. Its progressive attenuation need not be a disaster provided the process is adequately controlled.

13. But here, as elsewhere, it will be best if the transitional period is longer rather than shorter. In the interim our objective must be to retain a credible US conventional and nuclear commitment to the security of Western Europe. No European counter balance is in sight, even at post START levels, to the strategic capability of the Soviet Union. Nor will Western Europe find it easy, even at post CFE levels, to match the

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conventional capability of the USSR. It would be foolish to sacrifice prematurely a major stabilising factor which once gone will not return. In any case President Bush, who may reasonably expect to remain in office through much of the transitional period, wants to retain a say in the future of Europe and is prepared to make an appropriate contribution to this end.

14. That was one element in the policy statements made by Messrs Bush, Baker and Cheney in Europe before Christmas. Another, less explicit, was that the US is in the process of redefining what it means by an appropriate or "significant" contribution. The numbers of troops and nuclear weapons deployed in Europe will, failing some radical reversal in the international climate, drop dramatically. Willy nilly, the Western Europeans will have to carry a larger share of the responsibility for their own security. It will be for them to ensure that the resulting arrangements meet their needs.

Change in the Alliance

15. Given that there is a continuing requirement for the Alliance, what kind of changes need to be envisaged to ensure its continuing viability in the period of transition? Should another effort be made to enhance European defence cooperation within the Alliance? What are the implications of trying to shift the emphasis of the Alliance's work from the defence aspect to the more obviously political aspects?

16. European Defence Cooperation. The most valuable change to make in the Alliance, if it could be managed, would be a substantial shift in the balance of effort and responsibility from the Americans to the Europeans. Indeed I still have some difficulty in seeing how the future security requirements of Western Europe or the United Kingdom can be met, on a reliable basis, other than through a joint European effort within the Alliance. It has to be joint because (in addition to the more general case summarised in paras 9-11) the medium sized European nation state no longer provides a credible economic or geo-strategic basis for a balanced defence policy: the costs, speed, range and destructive potential of modern weapons systems enforce a larger perspective. It has to be European because the changing relationship between Europe and the United States (the New Atlanticism) plainly demands this. It has to be within the Alliance both because of the need to avoid duplication and diversion of effort and because the necessary US commitment (para 13) will only be forthcoming within the sort of structure (including an American SACEUR) which the Alliance provides. We will need to be sensitive to American concerns on this score in the fluid situation ahead. Hence the undesirability of a premature linkage between defence and the Community.

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17. Efforts to develop a European defence identity within the Alliance have hung fire for a generation. But while in the past it might have been a sensible preparation for the future (now upon us), too few were persuaded that it was essential. For the Nineties it looks more like a sine qua non. Either the Western Europeans work together effectively or they place their fundamental security at risk. This argues for a renewed effort to raise the political profile of such cooperation. We should explore with France, at the highest level possible, whether the dissolution of the status quo may not be changing their attitude to cooperation within the Alliance (which is not the same as reintegration). Given, for instance, that M. Rocard has acknowledged the need to harmonise the efforts of the IEPG, of WEU and of the Eurogroup, will France object for ever to co-location in Brussels? It may be time to revisit some other old ideas eg a single European Deputy to SACEUR (with real powers) and to give a more overtly "European" tone to such concepts at the NORTHAG air mobile division and the Franco-German brigade. Governments should associate themselves more publicly with the efforts of the European defence industry to rationalise itself.

18. European defence cooperation has a tired image. Necessary as it may be, there is no assurance that another attempt to boost it will be successful - particularly if the sentiment that defence is no longer worth the bother gathers force. Others will argue that it has been overtaken by pan-Europeanism. But, as I pointed out in June, in one fundamental respect the auguries are better: the Americans have recognised that their own policies require a more coherent European effort. The imminence of major US force reductions makes it harder to argue that creation of a European defence caucus might unnecessarily precipitate such withdrawals.

19. The Political Dimension. However for the moment, in the wake of recent US policy statements, the most discussed reform is increased emphasis on the Alliance's political dimension. It is a proposal which requires definition. Many of our Allies, though not necessarily the Americans themselves, seek to offset the prospective (and by them desired) reduction in the Alliance's military role by increasing its political role. I am sceptical. The Alliance has, of course, always been an organisation with a political purpose. But it has been NATO's collective military capability, and the integrated military structure underpinning it, which has given that purpose substance and credibility and which has made the Alliance unique. The vastly larger part of NATO's daily activity, in Belgium and across the Treaty area, is devoted to servicing the defence effort. It is courting disillusion to suppose that one can sustain the Alliance's authority by enhancing its evident importance as a forum for consultation while running down its military function.

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20. That said, the Alliance should of course emphasise and develop the political functions it has always had. The structure and the requirement are there. Political consultation is directly relevant to the overall task of the Alliance and enhances its image. But this must be seen in the context of eg the Harmel twin track approach. We should avoid duplication with other fora. We should look askance at the wish of many Allies to involve the Alliance directly in so-called transnational issues, to build up the Science Programme and the work of the Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society (worthy though these undertakings plainly are) except where the Alliance has something special to offer.

21. The Americans have an evident interest in validating the Alliance's role as a trans-atlantic forum. I have for some time been urging my US colleague (and his predecessor) to bring new topics to the Council - so far with little tangible result. It remains to be seen, for instance, whether the Americans want to consult seriously (as opposed to briefing) on out of area issues. We should focus, obviously, on the arms control process in all its aspects. Mr Baker has rightly drawn attention to verification as a potential subject for Alliance activity (and expenditure) in the politico-military area. The Secretary General has been making the same point for many months. Mr Wörner's own profile should be raised: he will need little encouragement! One obvious topic for him will be that of more formal contacts with the Warsaw Pact.

The Relationship with the Warsaw Pact

22. Is it in the interests of the Alliance that the Warsaw Pact continues to exist? What are the implications of the presumed shift from a confrontational to a cooperative relationship? How does this fit in with the growing interest in pan-European security structures based eg on the CSCE machinery?

23. The readiness with which Alliance Foreign Ministers agreed to the unprecedented visit of their Soviet colleague to Evere on 19 December suggests how much Western attitudes towards the Warsaw Pact have changed. The invitation to NATO's Secretary General to go to Moscow means that the relationship between the two alliances will have to be clarified sooner rather than later. So does the stated intention of the Soviet Union to remodel the Warsaw Pact along Alliance lines and the tendency, on both sides, to equate the organisations as promoters of stability.

24. No-one can know whether the governments emerging from the elections pending throughout Central and Eastern Europe will wish to remain members of the Warsaw Pact. The Soviet Government evidently hopes that they will. So should the

/Alliance



Alliance - though not all my colleagues on the Council would agree. Both organisations have a role in the transition. The one is at present the true guarantor of security for the whole of Europe. The other provides a measure of reassurance for the Soviet Union and a framework for co-ordinating the security policies of a potentially fissiparous group of countries. The existence of each organisation helps to justify that of the other. As is apparent in Vienna the originally confrontational relationship can co-exist with one that is essentially cooperative - the latter growing in importance at the expense of the former. The CFE negotiation is markedly easier to manage as (in substance) a dialogue than as the discussion among 23 or more individual participants which it may eventually become. Verification regimes, equally, will be simpler to handle if there are broadly speaking two sides. (In a pan European situation the IAEA model might become more relevant.)

25. It is too early to determine how a developing cooperative relationship might merge with attempts to intensify the CSCE process and to implement pan European concepts. If the former communist states opt to remain members of the Pact, then doubts about the legitimacy of that organisation as a partner for the Alliance will presumably disappear. The Alliance should try to find acceptable ways of making it clear now that in such circumstances we would be prepared to build on the Vienna experience to cooperate with a reformed Warsaw Pact on general security issues. The CSCE could intensify its activities in Baskets II and III, as has already been proposed. Such cooperation might provide the framework within which, given a reasonably extended transition, a new European security structure could emerge - whether in the guise of an enlarged NATO, some kind of merger or an altogether new arrangement based on the CSCE.

26. It is equally possible that the Warsaw Pact will lose members in the course of the year and disintegrate. This would mean a marked increase in the inherent instability of the situation. The CFE process would be placed at risk. The role of the Alliance would become more rather than less vital but, depending on how obvious the instability was, not necessarily easier to sell to our publics. We should presumably be forced to greater and earlier reliance on the full CSCE process - (ie with all 35 states involved and operating individually except for such coordination as the Alliance could sustain). Hence the relevance of Soviet and French efforts to, in effect, bring forward the 1992 Helsinki Summit. But one must wonder about the robustness of the CSCE if too much is asked of it too soon. It has the right agenda and the right membership. It enshrines important principles - notably on the inviolability of frontiers. But the Final Act is not a treaty, there are no

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sanctions and no means of discouraging serious disputes. Given present and prospective divergencies of interest and the absence of any form of team discipline, the consensus rule will make results very difficult to achieve. These are fundamental deficiencies.

The German Question

27. What should be the position of the Germans within the Alliance or alliances during the transitional period? Are there outcomes which the Alliance should be seeking to advance or avoid?
28. Of all the problems to be resolved in Europe's transition, the most immediate and most difficult - not least for the Alliance - is the German question. As seen from Evere the issue has for some time been not whether but when and how: how rapid will the progression be from rapprochement between the two Germanies to interdependence and thence to some form of unity? Recent weeks, highlighting the fragility of the GDR and the risk of chaotic breakdown, have foreshortened the time scales radically. We should probably assume that within twelve months inter-dependence will be a fact and that a formal link of some kind will be in place or in immediate prospect.
29. Whether or not this in fact turns out to be right, the Alliance must accept that it may be right and that it is the citizens of the GDR, not governments and politicians elsewhere, who will decide. The security implications of such a development for the Alliance are, obviously, vast. Criteria are needed by which to judge and perhaps to a limited extent to steer developments in a process whose direction is clear even if its pace and detail is largely unpredictable. Again from the perspective of Evere, such criteria might include the following:
- (a) to avoid creating suspicion or resentment between the Federal Republic and the Allies. The prospect of a single Germany, however configured, worries most non-German Europeans. But if it is inevitable there is little point in bewailing it. The Federal German authorities face an enormously difficult task. An outcome acceptable to the Alliance is more likely if the Allies display, at least in public, confidence in the Germans and a desire to help them than if we emphasise our doubts and our desire to constrain. As the Secretary General has noted, it would not be difficult to stir up popular disaffection for the Alliance in Germany. A reversion to the "us and them" attitudes of the first half of the century can be in no-one's interests. Whatever his inner hesitations, President Bush seems to have reached this conclusion at an early stage in his Administration and to have acted on that basis subsequently;

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(b) to ensure, if possible, that the neutrality option for a united Germany is eschewed. No-one should be allowed to think that a neutral or non-aligned Germany is a tolerable prospect for the Alliance. It would entail the collapse of NATO in anything like its present form and place a question over the further integration of the European Community (since political cooperation would be emasculated). In acknowledging the stabilizing value of present Alliance structures and of the presence of US troops in Europe (ie in Germany) the Soviet authorities no doubt took into account the risks inherent in German neutrality;

(c) to work together, as far as is compatible with (a) above, with the Soviet Union. It is an Alliance interest to see the German question handled so that it does not create additional pressures on President Gorbachev and the Soviet authorities. Hence the attractions of making haste slowly and the need to avoid statements implying that the GDR might join NATO. If the citizens of the GDR are in a hurry, it will be even more important to carry Moscow with us;

(d) to ensure that the Alliance's basic military requirements are respected. Specifically, given that NATO is to retain a defence role, the territory to be defended must be delimited. It follows from (b) above that the boundary in Central Europe should not shift Westwards. It follows from (c) that we should not press for it to move Eastwards, at least in the interim. (One cannot altogether rule out that Mr Gorbachev might accept even this in due course.) In other words, the Alliance's front line should stay where it is for the moment. The means of making this possible - "one country, two alliances", turning East Germany into a demilitarized zone, etc - all look awkward and implausible. But no more so, perhaps, than NATO exercises in one half of an integrated Germany are going to appear. Ways will have to be found if the other desiderata in this despatch are to be met.

The Military Role of NATO

30. In a situation where the two Germanies are moving towards merger and where an essentially cooperative relationship between the states of Western, Central and Eastern Europe is in prospect, what would be the role, doctrine and strategy of NATO's armed forces? What implications does this have for the next steps in arms control?

31. The question mark over NATO's boundary on the Central Front is also a question mark over the future military role of the Alliance. It is easy to assert the importance of the integrated military structure and of the Alliance's collective

/defence



defence capability as a source of stability in a period of uncertainty. It is less easy to define the long term "mission" of NATO's armed forces (and hence their strategy, doctrine and procurement policy) in a period when arms control expectations are accelerating exponentially and when much of the "enemy" is threatening to change sides. In a situation that is evolving daily major weapons systems are nonetheless being evaluated and ordered for entry into service in the next century.

32. It is no doubt craven but in my judgement it is vain and probably self defeating to try to make firm military judgements just now about the long term. We cannot know what the balance of Western European security preoccupations as between Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, the Middle East, North Africa and points further afield will look like in 10-15 years time. We should focus instead on managing the transition effectively ie on maintaining military capabilities and policies which take account of political realities while remaining credible in the eyes of those responsible for implementing them as well as of any potential adversary.

33. The political "realities" are already familiar enough. They include, beyond the German "question", German doubts about the environmental impact of stationed forces and the presence of nuclear weapons (few here now see any chance that the Germans will accept a Follow On to Lance); beyond an American intention to draw down their forces, American doubts about flexible response and extended deterrence and, in the case of Canada, about their ability to retain any forces in Europe for much longer; and beyond the general public euphoria about Eastern Europe, doubts about the ability of most Alliance members to resist anticipating the arms control dividend by engaging in unilateral cuts of one kind or another. (It will be argued that much of the aid required to help our former foes should be funded from defence expenditure no longer needed to deter them.)

34. Against that background, and the more detailed analysis of the doctrinal issues in my despatch of 22 June, the Alliance's interim military objectives might include the following:

(a) retention of the political commitment to forward defence. But the means of implementing the concept (and hence the meaning of the concept) will have to change. Current practice on the flanks rather than that on the Central Front will become the model ie fewer in place forces, more emphasis on reserves (and reservists) on mobility and "trading space for time", on reinforcement and on the repositioning of equipment of the ACE Mobile Force. (None of this would necessarily disadvantage the UK.) We shall be more dependent on timely warning;

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(b) retention of the concept of flexible response while recognising, again, that its meaning is going to change. The possession of nuclear weapons and of a credible philosophy for their use remains the only sure means of deterring resort to military force. Trip wire strategies are strategically and morally incoherent (and will undermine the US commitment to Europe). But there will be fewer conventional forces and also fewer and longer range sub-strategic systems. Strategic forces will be modelled on the concept of minimum deterrence. By the end of the transitional period sub strategic systems may well be deployed in the European theatre only at sea and on the homelands of the European nuclear powers. This prospect is relevant to the future balance of influence between the UK, France and Germany. If it is one with which the UK can live, it has implications for the way we approach the SNF negotiation eg our willingness to accept a much smaller SNF stockpile, and the emphasis we place on the FOTL issue;

(c) retention of an integrated military structure. Without this neither of the previous objectives will be attainable, the Alliance will tend to unravel and any future European system will probably lack the teeth necessary to make it more than a forum for discussion and a source of paper guarantees. It should be based on the deployment of stationed forces in some form (though where the FRG is concerned it will be essential to eliminate any lingering resemblance to occupation forces). It should take on a progressively more European aspect. As already noted (para 17), the multi-national character of military formations may become a criterion of equal importance to their operational effectiveness;

(d) cooperation with the Americans to ensure that reductions in their military presence do not undermine the strategic commitment. There is a risk that American cut backs will result in recrimination and a chain reaction which leaves the Alliance with military deployments interpreted by Congress and the JCS as inadequate to sustain the strategic commitment. Given care this outcome can be avoided. The transformation of the situation in Eastern Europe should make tolerable in the not too distant future a very substantial reduction in the symbols of the US commitment, both nuclear and conventional;

(e) an intensified effort to achieve closer cooperation and a further doctrinal rapprochement between France and the Alliance as a whole and the UK in particular. The relevance of this seems to me implicit in most of the argumentation in this despatch. The UK will have to ask itself once more whether, despite the performance and cost penalties we can afford not to cooperate with France on eg the next generation of tactical air to surface missiles;

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(f) active involvement by NATO, including the military authorities, in the operation of a CFE verification regime. Verification will, if all goes well, be a growth area in the Nineties. Giving NATO a substantial role in coordinating the effort and evaluating the results will make the regime more effective, will help to tie in the smaller countries and will enhance the position of the Organisation as a whole.

35. Arms Control. The arms control process in general will be of critical importance in the management of the period of transition. Acceptance by both sides, for instance, of minimum deterrence as an ultimate objective would throw a long shadow in front of it. But for the moment the CFE negotiations in Vienna are the central issue. Assuming that there is an agreement this year (and that the Warsaw Pact survives), a pause for reflection, consolidation and controlled implementation might well be sensible. The Soviet Union may turn out to share this view. But if not (or if others, including the US, do not) a further negotiation (CFE II) may offer the only practical hope of slowing the pace of structural disarmament within the Alliance and of controlling the twin processes of US and Soviet force reductions.

36. Negotiated reductions are, for many reasons, preferable to unilateral reductions. Without a CFE style framework the draw down in US and Soviet forces could occur in a precipitate, unpredictable and destabilizing manner (SACEUR is preoccupied by the possibility). A purely bilateral approach is unlikely to produce a militarily satisfactory solution or to be acceptable to others facing related political and economic pressures. The UK would have difficulty in exercising effective influence over a process which would affect it profoundly. A CFE II would no doubt be more difficult to manage than the present negotiation eg because of the uncertain prospects for the Warsaw Pact. But such a negotiation (possibly long drawn out) could make an important contribution to the preservation of security in a Europe in transition. The UK should seek to ensure that all stationed forces are included in its ambit and should play an active part in determining its objectives (eg to further constrain Soviet reinforcement and sustainment capabilities).

Can Consensus be Maintained?

37. Is there likely to be a consensus among Alliance governments on the answers to the questions posed in this despatch? Will there be sufficient public support to sustain the organisation, and in particular its defence role, through the period of transition?

/38.



38. It is going to require considerable political effort to develop and sustain a consensus within the Alliance about its role, and about how to maintain its members' security, in the period ahead. Recent reaffirmations, at Summits and Ministerial meetings, of the value of the Alliance are important and genuine. The last couple of years have demonstrated graphically the priority member states give to overcoming disagreements and finding common ground. But collective discussion of the fundamental issues which loom has barely begun.

39. The Americans have a policy - the New Atlanticism - though it is not clear to me how far they have thought through its implications. President Mitterrand is being extremely active. But the policies his government are pursuing look mutually inconsistent and will certainly have to be modified if consensus is to be possible. The Federal Republic's policies within and towards the Alliance will reflect Bonn's electoral and inner German preoccupations. They will presumably be liable to sudden shifts (as with the Ten Points) and are likely to make the Federal Republic a capricious partner for the rest of this year. The prospects thereafter depend greatly on the outcome of the election in December. Partly for that reason perhaps, many of the smaller Allies give the impression that thinking rigorously about the future is simply too difficult at present. (The fact that the Greeks and the Turks think only about each other is no help.) This does, it is true, have the advantage of leaving an opening for those who can make the effort, as Washington and Paris have already demonstrated. It also underlines the importance of close coordination between the major powers on all the issues including, as I argued last June, those of military policy.

40. The need has been identified some time ago for capitals to begin re-educating the public about the rationale for the Alliance's existence. The basic arguments - that the Soviet Union is a long term problem, that the threat may have diminished but the risk of war has not been eliminated, that no dependable alternative to the Alliance and its deterrent strategy is in prospect - are clear enough. But there has been little evidence of a concerted effort to use them. It must be doubted whether in most countries such an effort will occur. External events may make the case for us. But failing such a development the best means of sustaining public support for the Alliance in the short term are probably those already in play: emphasizing the political role (properly defined) as the complement of the defence role, arguing the merits of a cooperative relationship with the Warsaw Pact, embracing an on-going arms control process. How effective they will be remains to be seen.

/Conclusion



Conclusion

41. The challenges facing the Alliance continue to accumulate. The foundations on which it is built are shifting irrevocably. For good or ill, the question of "whether NATO" has become, de facto, an element in Europe's future security agenda. That said, the question today is "whither NATO". Europe faces its most crucial decade since the 1940s. The opportunities are great, the risks likewise. The process of creating a continent "whole and free" will stretch our adaptability and creativity to the limit. In the complex and uncertain period of transition already under way the Alliance, working alongside the European Community, within the CSCE and, perhaps, in a form of partnership with the Warsaw Pact has a vital role. Despite the longer term questions, there is no alternative to it in sight as a source of stability and security and as a means of preventing war. The Alliance, moreover, enshrines principles - notably the central importance of binding, multi-national security commitments which are embodied in appropriate military structures - that we must preserve. Adherence to those principles did much to make possible the 1989 Revolution and would do much to ensure that its benefits were not lost in future.

42. I am sending copies of this despatch to the Secretary of State for Defence, to the Chief of the Defence Staff, to Sir Percy Cradock, to HM Representatives in NATO and East European capitals and to the European Community as well as to the Head of the Delegation to the Negotiations on Conventional Arms Control in Europe in Vienna and to the Leader of the UK Delegation to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

I am, Sir
Yours faithfully

Michael Alexander

