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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

- VISITS - - -

POLICY

In reply refer to:  
I-21052/81

27 March 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Visit of Horst Ehmke with Richard Perle (U)

(U) Horst Ehmke, a member of the FRG Bundestag and a Deputy Chairman of the SPD Caucus, visited Richard Perle in the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Policy) on 25 March 1981, from 1100 to 1200. Main points of discussion were the following:

(S) LRTNF Arms Control Proposal: Mr. Ehmke asked if it might be possible to table a "politically sexy" LRTNF negotiating proposal in the fall of 1981, prior to the spring 1982 SPD Conference. He suggested the West could tell the USSR to take it or leave it and then tell Western publics that resolution was up to the Soviets; if the Soviets did not accept the proposal the West would go ahead with LRTNF modernization. Mr. Perle said we should tell the Soviets that the West was going forward with LRTNF modernization and if the Soviets were willing to negotiate seriously the West would be serious. He did not question the NATO LRTNF decision, but the West was at a disadvantage in that on the Soviet side the General Staff wrote the negotiating position while in the West everyone, including the press, was involved. The question was how can an agreement be obtained without the Soviets gaining advantage. Mr. Perle then provided an overview of past SALT negotiations, making a number of observations in this context: constraint was exercised by the US even when there was no arms control; from the US side it was not true that there was an ever increasing arms spiral; and funding for US strategic forces and US elements in the strategic balance were smaller in real terms today than they were in the latter part of the 1960s and early 1970s. He favored trying arms control but not if the results would be perverse with the West worse off. One reason many opposed SALT II was that the protocol established that NATO cruise missiles could not reach Soviet territory while Soviet SS-20s were unconstrained. He hoped that LRTNF negotiations would not go forward until the protocol expires at the end of 1981. It was not clear yet how the US would approach SALT, but it would not be limited to fine-tuning SALT II. Mr. Ehmke said the West might have to pursue a piecemeal approach to arms control rather than develop a comprehensive approach. The Soviets appeared scared by the US defense increases, and they might now be willing to make concessions. Some Europeans were afraid the US would forget about negotiations. Mr. Perle replied the US wants to deter, not scare, the USSR.

(S) Nuclear Systems and Thresholds: Mr. Perle stated that NATO should make every effort to raise the nuclear threshold. Conventional forces should be improved, and some assets assigned nuclear missions, such as some dual capable aircraft, should be converted to conventional missions. LRTNF modernization

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would make TNF systems less vulnerable to SS-20 attacks. Improved LRTNF capability would make the Soviets disperse their forces and thus reduce the effectiveness of their armor. In response to a question from Mr. Ehmke, Mr. Perle expressed the view that Enhanced Radiation Weapons would not lower the nuclear threshold; there would be only a very minimal inclination by leaders to use ERW before they were prepared to use other nuclear weapons. He favored the least damaging, most discrete weapons to accomplish the task and was amazed that the clergy argued against more discriminate weapons. Mr. Ehmke said the clergy and students did not want facts and complicated arguments; the new generation had not thought its way through deterrence and defense. Mr. Perle suggested that Mr. Ehmke was in a privileged position to help educate the public.

(S) Sea-based Systems: In response to a question about Secretary Weinberger's interest in placing MX on submarines, Mr. Perle said SecDef was considering all options and that the issue was under study. The US would need survivable land-based forces; he personally questioned placing MX at sea because of the requirements for accuracy and multiplicity of challenges for the Soviets. He emphasized that the US was not moving toward having no nuclear systems on US territory, offering to provide a map showing nuclear bases in the US even without MX. Mr. Ehmke remarked that if the US deployed the MX at sea there would be a rekindling of arguments in Europe in favor of placing LRTNF at sea.

(S) Technology Controls: Mr. Perle expressed concern that the USSR was catching, and in some areas, surpassing the US in technology. In recent years the leading edge of technology in the West had come from the commercial sector, not the military. He referred to high competition among Allies to do business with the USSR and asked for support from Germany in US efforts in COCOM to tighten up on exports to the USSR. Mr. Ehmke, while noting that Germany was not a leader in many areas of technology and that the Bundestag played no real role in technology control, expressed confidence that the FRG would be willing to help if the US makes a convincing case.

(U) At the conclusion of the meeting, Mr. Ehmke said he would like to have Mr. Perle invited to a security panel meeting on 19-21 June in Bonn which will include participants from Allied countries as well as Messrs. Schmidt, Genscher, and Apel.

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