SECRET

8 November 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: The Current Negotiations With the UK and FRG Concerning Military Issues

Problems of equitable burden sharing which arose between the UK and FRG and the US and FRG have now led, in the current tripartite negotiations, to a broad review of allied strategy and force requirements. The scope and importance of this agenda suggest that in fact what these talks are about is the future American role in Europe. The central questions raised are whether the post-1945 pattern of our involvement with Western Europe's security would be, and should be, changed by a reduction in American forces stationed there.

This paper does not deal directly with the immediate technical issues, on which much staff work is already being done. Instead, it is an attempt to see this episode in inter-allied relations in some historical perspective, to define political forces at work which will affect the future conduct of our allies and of the Soviet Bloc, and to suggest how our interests might be affected by a move at this time to redefine the American military role in Europe.

SECRET

Europe Today, Soviet Policy, and the American Interest

The goals which American policy set itself in Europe in the early postwar period have been achieved in large measure. Western Europe has not been attacked, and in recent years even the veiled threats of Soviet attack faced earlier have ceased. Internal Communist forces have declined greatly in potency. The crippled societies of 1945 recovered confidence behind the American shield, with the result that disintegrating forces were contained and moderate and constructive elements were able to dominate the politics of the recovery period. Rapid economic growth followed, and for the first time in Europe's history the benefits began to be more widely shared. In addition, American influence helped to foster the European unity movement, and this, together with NATO, provided a framework for reintegrating West Germany into Europe as a respectable and responsible state.

It was foreseen that the recovery of strength and pride in Europe would produce some resentment of the vastly disproportionate power of the US and of its predominant weight in the Alliance. Not only has this happened, but in recent years many Europeans have had an increasing sense of not being master in their own house. This feeling has been sharpened by fears of an American investment invasion fueled with vast resources and technological supremacy, by American pressures for greater

military effort under American revisions of strategic doctrine, and by appeals for active support of American policy in other areas, notably in Asia. American "leadership," once called for to heal Europe's sickness, has often, when it was actually provided, been received as unpalatable medicine. De Gaulle, in the French manner, has elevated such discontents into a general theory and made them the basis of a policy which categorically repudiates the present American role in Europe. This policy has produced an organizational crisis in the Alliance.

The voices of discontent have found some echo in West Germany, always hitherto the "staunchest" of American partners in Europe. There, economic strains, American pressure for offset payments, and concern that Allied policy was moving toward acceptance of an indefinitely divided Germany have combined with weak leadership to produce some political disarray. For the first time in the postwar period, the barometer of German-American relations has tended to register heavy weather.

Some of the distemper in European-American relations arises from a revised view of Soviet policy which has gained wide credence in recent years. Since 1962, when the Soviets allowed the Berlin "crisis" to fade away in the aftermath of the Cuban confrontation, the USSR has refrained from crude pressures under military threat. The main theme of its policy has been European security, that is, settlement and stabilization on the

basis of the status quo in Germany. There is a strong desire in Western Europe to believe that stable and increasingly constructive relations with the East are possible, and no great desire to allow this vision to be aborted by claims of the Germans to the unity of their country. A mood that looks forward to enjoying the fruits of Western Europe's growing productivity, without further intrusion of the alarms, excursions, and costs of cold war, inevitably makes the burdens of NATO, a military alliance built on the assumption that there was a real threat of Soviet attack, harder to bear.

It is natural that by now questions should also begin to be raised in this country about the American role in Europe. Do we really need large military forces there more than two decades after the end of World War II? Are the costs acceptable in view of Europe's prosperity and American burdens elsewhere? Are there not persuasive indications that the USSR no longer poses a "threat" to Western Europe? The answers to these questions naturally give some difficulty in the context of domestic politics. They are easier if sought in terms of the long-range interests of the United States as a world power.

It is a cliché, but still valid, to declare that the alignment of Western Europe in world politics remains vital for us. There is some tendency nowadays to think of that area as parochial, withdrawn in

weariness from the balance of power game, and there is much in the European mood that supports this. But this area is still the most powerful concentration of productive forces outside the US and USSR. Historically, its political dynamism has been formidable. To consign it to the backwaters of world politics, to assume a quiet Europe at peace with itself and withdrawn from struggles that proceed elsewhere, would probably not be a sound wager on the future.

The USSR clearly does not think that all power struggles in Europe are over, despite its relative passivity on European issues in recent years. The Soviets desisted from gross pressures after 1962 because they understood at last the great risks involved, and because they realized finally that pressures would not rupture but only consolidate the Western Alliance and the American presence in Europe. They have seen in recent frictions in European-American relations an opportunity to pursue by other means their main objective of excluding American power and influence from that area. The emphasis on detente in Europe, on an all-European security settlement made without American participation, aims at disrupting the Atlantic connection and at moving Western Europe toward a more neutral position in world politics. The Federal Republic would continue to be treated as a pariah, held in contemptuous isolation until it produced politicians who saw the light and were willing to come to terms with Soviet power. Thus a Soviet "threat" continues to exist in

the sense that, even though the USSR does not for the present menace Western Europe with armed attack, its basic strategy is still to separate Western Europe from America, and thereby greatly to diminish both as power factors.

It would be absurd to suggest that this Soviet vision of a vast shift in the world balance of power is, because of current frictions within the Western Alliance, even remotely near realization. The dominant political forces in Western Europe today are still, despite concern over some American policies, generally committed to the view that an Atlantic coalition under American leadership is essential to their interests. De Gaulle's doctrines have for the most part been taken as too much an expression of personal idiosyncracy and French particularism. His nomination of himself to lead a third-force European coalition has not won general acclaim; the division in NATO is still 14 to 1.

On a long view, however, American policy cannot afford to be complacent about Europe. This country has a role to play as a world power, while Western European states now define their interests largely in regional terms; this difference in angle of vision will inevitably strain relations from time to time. After two world wars, moreover, Europeans incline to stand aside from ideological struggles on a world scale, and

to confront no power challenge unless it is visibly at their own gates. At the same time, the European unity movement appears to have stagnated, and the Gaullist impulse to a revival of nationalism makes it impossible to preclude a reversion to intra-European quarreling. And there can be no doubt that the Soviets stand ready still to exploit whatever divisions may develop within Europe, and between Europe and the US.

Altogether, while the condition of Europe and of Atlantic relations today do not give grounds for alarm, there is reason for attentive concern. Because any untoward developments on this front have such a vital bearing on world power relations, and ultimately on American security, there is always reason for special sensitivity. It will be in the American interest for a long time to come to give highest priority to Europe, to its security and internal order, and to the preservation of our influence there, however heavy the burdens and intense the preoccupations elsewhere.

Force Reductions as an Issue in the Alliance

The question posed in connection with the tripartite negotiations is whether the American stake in Europe and in good Atlantic relations would be prejudiced by a significant reduction in American forces. Or, given the condition of Europe described above, is this the moment when some partial military disengagement can be undertaken with tolerable risk?

There is no way of defining exactly what amount of cut in American forces would now be viewed as "significant" by the allies. Clearly there is some degree of further modest drawdown which would be understood, even if not with full sympathy, as owing to the demands of the Vietnam war and to the balance of payments problem; such a cut would not be construed as a turning point in US policy toward Europe which confronted the allies with a new situation. Equally there is some larger scale of cutback which would be so construed. Very likely this would be true of any cut large enough to effect really meaningful savings for the US. It is also possible, perhaps likely, that a lesser cut would be taken as a portent of a larger one to follow. In any case, what is worth discussing is a cut, whatever its magnitude, which did lead the Europeans, and perhaps the Soviets as well, to conclude that American policy toward Europe was changing direction and that we intended to lessen our involvement there. It is not necessary to discuss reactions to a belief that we intended simply to abandon our European interest and commitment entirely, since nobody would be likely to infer that.

It should also be said that, whatever meaning Europeans might attach to a reduction they took to be significant, their views would probably be little affected by reasons the US might give or by public relations manipulation. European opinion-makers are notoriously skeptical of official truth, and most sophisticated people would prefer to believe

the "real reasons" which would surely be provided by numerous articulate commentators. At present, when many people find in the Vietnam war a welcome pretext for disenchantment with American policy and for distrusting the credibility of American official utterances, even very sound and defensible explanations would be likely to encounter heavy going. The various liabilities of American policy in Europe described above are a political-psychological reality of the present moment. Since, as will be argued below, the political effects of a force cutback provide the main ground of concern, it would be well to recognize that at present our ability to influence the construction which European opinion puts on our policies is less than it has been.

Security Implications

The most obvious question raised by a proposal to reduce US forces is whether Western Europe would be exposed to significantly increased risk of Soviet attack. It is also the easiest to answer.

It is extremely doubtful that the Soviets at any time in the postwar period seriously entertained the idea of achieving their objectives in Western Europe by actual military attack. At various times they threatened war if certain limited demands were not met, primarily concerning Berlin. In the early postwar years they probably believed that such threats against a weakly defended Western Europe, together with the

considerable subversive potential they then had there, might cause Western will to fail, and that such a demonstration of Soviet power might, as new demands were added, lead on to a general collapse. In the late 50's, under a carefully-fostered impression that they had achieved a decisive power advantage in nuclear-rocket weapons, they revived the same technique of assault by intimidation, and again they failed. The Soviets have evidently learned that it is not possible to advance in Western Europe on the cheap, that is, by a mere show of intimidating power.

The Soviets pulled back from actual attack primarily, no doubt, because they could not foresee the consequences and judged the likely costs of a major war to be unacceptable. There is another reason that ought not to be underestimated. Soviet history shows that under this regime there are serious political-ideological inhibitions against resort to naked aggression. Advances for Communist power are supposed to be won by indigenous revolutionary action. Even if the Soviet leadership might in some circumstances bring itself to overlook this nicety, it would have to be concerned about the reactions of the Soviet people in a major war brought on at Soviet initiative.

There is every reason to believe that the grounds the Soviets had for refraining from direct attack in the past still apply, and would apply even if American forces in Europe were considerably reduced, probably even if they were withdrawn entirely. The Soviets know that the

US considers it vital to its own security that Communist power not engulf Western Europe. They would understand that overt aggression by them would unleash a train of events carrying the highest risk of general nuclear war. Their conduct over the last two decades proves that they intend to stand well back from that contingency.

Soviet Policy in the Wake of a Force Cut

It is possible, of course, that the Soviets would think that a US force withdrawal meant that Atlantic links were weakening, that if they pushed once again with tactics of intimidation the Western Alliance would prove fragile, and that they could then register some demonstrative gain, say, finally at Berlin, which would prove to all the world that the relations of power had shifted. This seems extremely unlikely. Any American force cutback would no doubt be accompanied by elaborate mutual pledges of continued firmness within the Western Alliance. More important, the Soviets would know that the US would be highly sensitive to any new Soviet moves to exploit the situation. They would probably expect, in fact, that the American response to any opening gambit by them would be so vigorous as to preclude the nicely modulated development of a "crisis" situation under their control.

This is not to say that at some later time the Soviets might not come to think that a reduced American posture in Europe invited a renewal of pressure tactics. But this would not arise from the altered force equation as such. It would result from their reading of the general drift of European-American relations; they might infer that a really divisive loss of mutual confidence among the Allies made effective resistance to new demands unlikely. Since the Soviet style is somewhat heavy-handed, there could be no guarantee that they would not act in this manner at some stage.

The scenario they would at first consider more promising would be entirely different. They would activate their diplomacy and propaganda to persuade Western Europe that, with the US beginning to disengage, new possibilities for detente on a European basis were opening up. Some withdrawal of Soviet forces would occur to document this trend. Cultural exchanges and economic relations would be expanded wherever possible to provide symbolism. Plausible security undertakings would be offered, and these would, of course, at least imply recognition of the status quo in Germany. Efforts would be made to give the communiques issuing from the meetings of statesmen an anti-American nuance. The object of all this would be to commit influential political elements in Western Europe to the view that American power was no longer needed there, and that its final departure could be viewed with equanimity. The Soviets would also hope

that discreet cultivation of European-American dissensions that might arise would help to accelerate a process of political-military disengagement.

The Soviets are not fools enough to believe that such a campaign could achieve quick or easy success. But they would grind away at it so long as the auspices were favorable. The assets they could bring to bear would include their political-subversive apparatus in the West. In the political climate the Soviets would be trying to engender, the Communist parties would have greatly improved chances of escaping from their chronic isolation, and united front tactics might work to considerably better effect than heretofore. Success would obviously depend on bringing a fairly wide spectrum of non-Communist opinion to the view that the situation in Europe was changing in a fundamental way which called for new departures in both internal and external policy.

All this is a very large order and the Soviets would have their work cut out for them, even if European-American relations deteriorated markedly in the wake of force reductions. It would be the extent of deterioration over some considerable period which would determine the measure of their opportunity.

Repercussions in the Alliance

Thus, the eventual reaction of the European allies to what they saw as a significant change in American military policy would be crucial. It is unlikely that there would be any immediate general alarm about the security of the area. Fear of actual Soviet attack is now minimal. Sophisticated opinion would realize that the full weight of US power remained committed by the forces which remained, and would believe also that the US, which has borne the burdens of global struggle in other less vital areas, could not in its own interest be indifferent to the fate of Europe. Some recriminatory voices would no doubt be loud, and De Gaulle would help to magnify them, but they would probably not be determining for the attitudes of Allied governments. There might be some initial confusion, but it would probably be manageable.

It would be the long pull which would matter. Politicians, like investors, discount the future. However the force cuts were justified, there would be some sense that American resources were overstrained, or that some shift of priorities in American policy, presumably toward Asia and away from Europe, was taking place. Over time this could mean still less inclination to support American policy in other areas or to accept American leadership on matters that did not immediately involve the security of Europe.

A military alliance almost never collapses all at once; it dies away by degrees as the participants sense that the original premises that bound them have lost validity. Ultimately, and this would be especially true if US policy encountered reverses elsewhere and the general view held of the relations of power should become less advantageous to the US than at present, the basic alignment of Western Europe could be affected. A gradual shift of perspective might at some critical juncture lead Western European states to adopt the view that the USSR was after all the only first class power relevant to Europe's arrangements, and to begin to accommodate themselves accordingly. The Soviets would, if they followed the policy described above, make this seem easy and without risk. Appropriate shifts in the internal balance of political forces would occur in Western European countries, and the end result would be a perceptible move to a middle, perhaps even a neutralist position between the US and USSR.

This kind of outcome seems very far down the road at present, even far-fetched. To suggest that it would flow inevitably from any specific amount of reduction of American forces in Europe would be very misleading. Nevertheless, the agreed military dispositions give the Alliance concrete expression and symbolize its meaning. When they are changed in some significant way, especially at the initiative of the dominant member, it may eventually appear to other members that a trend is developing which

will finally invalidate the original rationale. An alliance is sustained by men's belief that it reflects power relations which can be relied on to serve their long-term as well as their immediate national security interest.

Thus, while it cannot be plausibly argued that a significant force cut now would necessarily do irreparable damage to the prospects of the Alliance, it can be said that such a move runs the risk of storing up trouble for the future. The disarray already existing in NATO is not a good omen, and means at least that whatever unfavorable trend was set in motion would be intensified in the present context.

The Federal Republic

Generalizations which can be made with some justice for the Alliance as a whole would almost certainly not apply in West Germany. The German reaction to a significant force cutback would be serious, possibly traumatic.

This would not be the case because the Germans have a very much greater fear than others of the imminence of Soviet attack, though obviously their front-line position plays a psychological role. On the whole, they have come to accept the view generally held in Europe that the Soviets are effectively deterred. Since they believe this is owing primarily to US nuclear power, the withdrawal of a part of the ground forces would not in itself seem immediately critical to their security.

The Germans are, however, far more sensitive than others to what changes in US military dispositions might signify for the general direction of US policy. The large US military presence has meant, not merely that the US was committed to the defense of West German territory, but also to upholding the German national interest in the still unresolved struggle over the division of the country. A significant cutback in that presence would imply for Germans that the US was finally abandoning its sponsorship of the national claim to unity and was accepting the status quo for the indefinite future. Since there is no confidence whatever that unity can be won without American backing, there would inevitably be cries of betrayal.

It has been argued that the Germans know anyway that there is no present prospect of achieving unity, and that they are resigned to this fact. This is almost certainly a superficial reading for the long term. During the postwar period the Germans have been in desperate need of recovering their self-respect and the respect of others. They are bound to think that they will never achieve this if they resign themselves weakly to the brutal injustice of partition. With confidence reawakened by their postwar achievements, with a sense of guilt over the comparative lot of a fourth of the nation, with their once great capital still held as a dreary hostage, it seems more likely that they will increasingly find the present outcome of their history unacceptable. This mood will be sustained

by politicians who, to avoid being outflanked by other politicians, will need to reaffirm the goal of reunification. It would be prudent to think that this issue will still stir the cauldron of politics in Germany in ways that cannot now be foreseen.

For the present the Germans surely have no place to go, but this may not always be true. Political changes which could come eventually in both the FRG and the USSR might revise the options. Or, resignation might finally end in political demoralization and the West would then have another kind of problem; without a strong and stable Germany the Alliance would be dangerously weakened. Thus, the political condition of Germany will remain a key factor for the security of the West.

A political shakeout is now going on in Bonn, and this development had not a little connection with recent frictions in German-American relations. It is impossible to say what further tremors would result from a cutback in US forces which was viewed as a serious reversal for German policy. Probably it would become more difficult to find a stable majority. A prolonged process of political regrouping might ensue, accompanied by much agonizing soul-searching over national goals and policies. In any case, it is certain that the profoundest effect of force cutbacks would be in Germany, and that at this time nobody can say with assurance what would be the effect on politics and policy in the Federal Republic. As a

nation, the post-1945 Germans have not yet found an identity and a role. They are unlikely to be able again to menace their neighbors militarily; but it remains to be proved whether in a political sense and over the long term they will be an asset or a liability to European stability. Thus, a move by the US which disoriented the Germans seriously would carry some unknown, and possibly high degree of risk.

If Not Now, When?

The conclusion implicit in the foregoing discussion is that, while a significant cutback in US forces at this time would probably not have any immediately disastrous consequences, the whole context is unfavorable and risks setting in train a process of deterioration in the Alliance which would be ominous for the future. To take this view is not the same as arguing that a change in the US military posture in Europe can never be undertaken without excessive risk. It is possible to describe circumstances which might be more favorable and to suggest criteria which should govern so sensitive a decision.

In principle, such a decision should be taken in some positive policy framework and on calculations aimed at advancing Western interests. The move proposed at present has nothing of that. We did not choose the time for an advantageous act of policy; instead, the impression is given that we are acting under the pressure of considerations, mainly financial,

which compel the move even at some political risk. The psychological effect is therefore negative and defensive.

A period in which such a move could be turned to policy advantage would be one in which American credit generally and regard for American leadership in the Alliance were high. It would be a period when general detente in Soviet-American relations was recognized to exist, and seen to be the consequence mainly of Soviet regard for American strength and Western solidarity. This kind of setting would lend positive virtue to the argument that the prolonged presence of large American forces was unwholesome for the Europeans and for us. It would make it feasible to offset political risks and simultaneously to shore up the Alliance by giving greater emphasis to the political content of Atlantic relations, that is, to common political objectives both within Europe and in the world at large. Finally, and of greatest importance, the kind of context described would make it possible to link force withdrawals with a new initiative to the Soviets for movement on the German problem. They might not respond, but they would be placed under some pressure and it would be they and not we who would be on the defensive on the German issue. At least, the cutback would then be associated in the German mind with a positive political strategy.

It could be argued that the international setting in the year following the Cuban missile crisis had some features corresponding to the general prescription given above. While it is fatuous to reel back history, that period illustrates circumstances in which conceivably a US force cutback in Europe could have been undertaken with greater advantage. Similarly, it is possible that in the wake of a settlement of the Vietnam war another more propitious phase will emerge. In any case, it is evident that other contexts are conceivable which would be more promising and less hazardous than the present one.

Whatever the time, we ought to choose it deliberately and for positive reasons of policy, unless, of course, we are simply compelled by circumstances. The case for force cuts in Europe is apparently not argued on the basis of such necessity, only on the ground of marginal advantage to the balance of payments. The argument of this paper is that the political risks at this time carry far greater weight. If we make blunders of political judgment in our relations with our European Allies, we cannot count on the Soviets to overlook mercifully the openings we make for them. The struggle over Europe, focused in Germany, continues despite the surface calm of recent years, and that area is still more crucial to our security than any other.

JOHN HUIZENGA
Board of National Estimates