

## **Reflections on the Work of the NATO Council in the Eighties (1980-1985)**

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When I left from Moscow in October 1980, **Foreign Minister Gromyko** hosted to me – the West German Ambassador - a fare well luncheon for me at the Spiridonowka Palais. He was wondering, as he said in his remarks on that occasion, what a diplomat would have to do at the site of the Military Alliance of the West. I explained to him the task and functioning of the Permanent Council – the meeting place of Ambassadors in between Ministerial sessions. “Well”, he said, “if that is so, you have to be member of the “National Security Council”. He was right. At the time the German NATO-Ambassador was a regular Member of the National Security Council which is a special Cabinet Committee.

### **The Missile Crisis – “Doppelbeschuß” and SS 20 in compliance with the twin doctrine or strategy of NATO on Defense and Detente**

The agenda, the debates of the time oscillated around the traditional twin concept of defense and détente and their meaning under the prevailing and the newly emerging international conditions:

1. On the one hand we faced a major East West strategic crisis with the twin decision on the preparation for the deployment of the intermediate ballistic missiles (Pershing II) and cruise missiles and on parallel negotiations on a negotiated solution for the issues caused by the ongoing deployment of SS 20 missiles and the corresponding Western deployment program. The deployment decision of the Alliance had caused the emergence a of a public protest movement, notably in England, the Netherlands and Germany – with active, and clandestine financial support from communist influence organizations. The peace movement created with official support in East Germany finally turned against the regime itself in the fall of 1989.
2. NATO as well as member states concerned launched an intensive public information c campaign to countervail the protest movement. The NATO Secret Intelligence group discussed – on an annual basis – the size and impact of Communist infiltration, espionage and propaganda.
3. On the other hand Moscow and the West faced – from different angles of course - the issues of détente traditionally related to the CSCE process initiated by the Helsinki Final Act of August 1975, however dramatically accentuated by the emergences of a nation-wide protest movement in Poland in the late seventies– symbolized by the Solidarnosc trade union movement and its leader Lech Walesa.

It had been Henry Kissinger who had coined – already before the emergence of Solidarnosc - the words “*We – NATO - have to administer the decline of the Soviet Empire*”. In a way I echoed his words with my article in NATO Brief of March 1984

in its last paragraph with the words: *“Against this background, it is entirely possible to believe that the legitimate security interests of the Soviet Union could, in the long run, be better served by East-West agreements and treaties rather than by the enforced maintenance of a political-military and ideological position of hegemony in Eastern and Central Europe. As the history of the past 40 years has shown, the hegemonic concept in Eastern Europe has failed.”*

### **The Polish Crisis 1980:**

At NATO headquarters – meaning to say in the North Atlantic Council - we had heated debates on the issue of sanctions against the emergency rule by General Jaruzelski in Poland (Martial Law). The question was: How to achieve the suspension of Martial Law – by sanctions or by collaboration? That was the issue. Washington pleaded for sanctions, Bonn pleaded for dialogue. A compromise emerged.

Also, the perspective of another Soviet invasion – now in Poland – loomed over the horizon. Those of us who had served as diplomats in Moscow at the time of the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan (1979) – wondered whether - in the center of decision making process in Moscow - there was still appetite for another risky military intervention. The Polish army may have been considered pro-Russian, but the population and the Solidarnosc movement were perceived of as utterly anti-Soviet in mood and intentions.

**Both issues – the missile crisis and the Polish issue - were heavily loaded with political emotions and caused public concerns of all sorts and in all corners of our publics:**

On the occasion of the NATO Summit in the spring of 1982 in Bonn with US President Ronald Reagan taking part it was he who coined the word of the day in Bonn: “We are at war with the Devil’s Empire””. Helmut Schmidt - the German Chancellor - was not amused by this outburst. Outside the conference hall a huge protest demonstration against the deployment of US missiles in Europe had gathered in Bonn - with 400.000 participants, some of them disguised.

Some years later in Berlin, Ronald Reagan publicly said – standing on the balcony in front of the Berlin Wall: “Mr. Gorbachew - Tear down the Berlin Wall!” A few years later circumstances brought about by the reform policies of Gorbachev - allowed the tearing down of the wall, by the then GDR-prisoners – the ordinary people in East Germany.

However, it was Ronald Reagan and Michael Gorbachov who belatedly – after the beginning of the deployment of the Pershing II missiles and of the Cruise Missiles - agreed - after initial abortive attempts such as in Reykjavik in 1986 - on the Zero-Solution for the SS 20 missiles and the US medium range missile systems in Europe and elsewhere.

The debate within NATO circle about Soviet intentions oscillated about the questions whether Soviet reform steps and agreement to imbalanced disarmament steps constituted a policy of a tactical nature or of a far reaching strategic decision to fundamentally change the relationship with the capitalist US managed World.

### **Bread and Butter Issues of NATO**

Besides of these dramatic developments and burning political issues of the time, of course, there were the bread and butter issues of defense planning and defense funding – aiming at the

famous three percent mark for Germany and others with regard to their defense outlays, and the constant arguments about substantial increases in the funding for NATO infrastructure projects that preoccupied defense and finance ministers at all times. Germany was the second largest contributor. The same applied for military assistance programs in support of the defense programs of Turkey and of Greece. These contributions were supposed to maintain and improve the modus vivendi between these two rival nations.

In order to achieve a more balanced approach of the annual review of defense planning and the fulfillment of defense programs - a thorny issue at all times for the Alliance partners - we suggested- successfully by the way - **to establish a balance sheet of the conventional forces deployed or earmarked for deployment by NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries in the European theater and the adjacent European waters.** Until then, information on the development of Soviet military capabilities was mostly provided by the US Department of Defense.

Another aspect of this debate concerned the **annual review on the economic performance of Warsaw Pact countries and of the size of the Soviet bloc defense budgets to be calculated in Western defense expenditures per unit of defense equipment.** The debates also concerned the issues related to the genuine percentage of the state budget and the GNP spent on defense in Warsaw Pact countries. The deficiencies of the economic performance of the WP countries were an established fact among experts.

### **Secretary General of NATO – some Observations**

During my time **Josef Luns** who became Secretary General of NATO in 1971 finally resigned – in 1984. Until that time, there were no agreements regarding the length of tenure of office of a NATO Secretary General. Now it was considered appropriate to establish such limits for the tenure of the office of the NATO Secretary General.

Many thought that there should be a replacement for a man who had served the Alliance well, however to stay in the office for more than ten years was too long. It was difficult, however, to convince Josef Luns who was in good health, to resign from his function. He liked his job and had no intention what so ever to step down. Soundings about a possible successor to Josef Luns were also undertaken in Bonn. The name of the then Governing Mayor of Berlin (West), **Richard von Weizsäcker** was circulated. He enjoyed international prestige. However, Bonn – I mean the government - at the time did not want to have a German in the chair of the Secretary General. Allies were asking themselves: “Why this German reluctance?” People speculated. Eventually **Lord Carrington** - an experienced British politician and former Minister of Defense and Foreign Minister - was chosen as new Secretary General. It was a good choice. Britain was a staunch supporter of the Alliance. He was followed later in the Eighties by the German Defense Minister **Manfred Wörner**. Contrary to the preceding Schmidt led government the CDU led Government had no hesitation to see a German at the top of NATO.

The Cold War, however, came to an end luckily, and it was important to establish strong and trustworthy relations with the Soviet Union – based on the arms control agreements reached on the Zero-Solution for the intermediate ballistic and cruise missiles of both sides in Europe and in Paris in November 1990. Manfred Wörner was the right man for this important task, I think, and many within the NATO family and outside shared this judgment. He contributed immensely to the development of stable relations between NATO and its members on the one hand and the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation respectively at the time on the other

hand. He was however also a strong supporter for the inclusion of the Baltic Republics and of former Soviet bloc countries in NATO. At the time it was a controversial issue.

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