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N A T O U N C L A S S I F I E D

ORIGINAL ; ENGLISH
29th December, 1971

POLADS(71)77

MEMORANDUM

To: The Political Committee

From: Acting Chairman

SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN MEDIA COMMENTARIES
ON THE NATO MINISTERIAL MEETING, DECEMBER 1971

There is attached a report prepared by the Political Affairs Division of the International Secretariat on this subject.

(Signed) George ANDREWS

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SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN MEDIA COMMENTS ON THE NATO
MINISTERIAL MEETING, DECEMBER 1971

SUMMARY

Soviet and East European media comment on the December 1971 Ministerial Meeting continued the tradition which began in December 1968 of a relatively calm and brief reaction. In the case of the East Europeans, brevity is even more pronounced than hencetofore.

The common theme of numerous commentaries on the NATO Council session was that there had been a "collision of two tendencies" - namely between "realists" and those who were still inspired by cold war attitudes.

Some disappointment was also expressed that the vigorous campaign on behalf of the security conference had not succeeded in winning a more flexible approach from the Western Alliance. Albania once more denounced the rapprochement between the two aggressive blocs, NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

Soviet Reactions

The starting point for Soviet coverage of the Brussels meeting was the decision taken by the Ten Defence Ministers of the "Eurogroup" to increase substantially their military effort. Commentators emphasized the role played by Secretary Laird to this effect and Washington's pressure on the Allies "hypocritically motivated by the necessity to conduct talks on relaxation from a position of strength". They also put stress on the United Kingdom as having shown special zeal in this respect, with Lord Carrington making "particularly belligerent calls".

Reporting on the DPC Meeting aimed at creating the impression that the main concern of the NATO countries was to further build up their military might and step up the arms race at a time when there are favourable prospects for the development of East-West relations. Commentators pointed out that "the new spiral in the arms race inspired by the Pentagon and the NATO Generals" was causing grave concern among the European public, notably in Denmark, Belgium and Holland.

In general, Soviet commentators expressed disappointment over the allegedly ambiguous character of the communiqué and unanimously developed the theme of differences among the NATO Allies. They opposed in this context those who advocated a policy of strength to those in favour of a more flexible line. M. Schumann's speech, they said, had caused obvious irritation to the "Atlanticists", as he had expressed disagreement with the stands of certain countries who made the convocation of an all-European conference conditional on "all sorts of preliminary terms". The USA and Britain were unable to oppose the idea of an all-European security conference in view of "the new political atmosphere which is developing in Europe and the striving of the majority of countries to achieve an improvement in East-West relations." They were, therefore, trying to delay the preparations for such a Conference. This clash of two tendencies laid a stamp of duality and contradiction upon the final communiqué, where "fog often takes the place of ink".

In their evaluation of the results achieved by this winter session, commentators agreed that the forces continuing to think in terms of the cold war have not given up their positions. However, according to some other views, Western Europe has moved so far away from the cold war that the USA could no longer count on a return to it.

Albania

"Zeri Popullit" on 14th December asserted that there was nothing to choose between the aims of the NATO Ministerial session and the recent Warsaw Pact Foreign Ministers Meeting; both were designed to co-ordinate the US-Soviet policy of "dictation and hegemony". As for any balanced reduction of forces in Europe, "the significance of this concept was underlined by the USA's 310,000 troops in Europe and the USSR's 31 divisions in satellite countries".

On the same day, Radio Tirana drew attention to the change in the balance of forces which occurred in 1971 when the EEC finally agreed to admit Britain and some of its EFTA partners. The two superpowers therefore sense the need to unite their efforts in the face of the new danger threatening their hegemony.

Bulgaria

On the 13th December, the official press agency BTA underlined that, although the final NATO communiqué was drafted in a conciliatory tone, it was lacking in lucidity and concreteness, as it contained a great deal of ambiguities and contradictions. This was due to two basic reasons: "disagreement among the Atlantic Allies, which had imposed a compromise text with a view to satisfying all, and the intentions of the guiding powers in NATO to interpret that text in a most favourable way with a view, if not to foiling, at least to delaying, a European Conference". It concluded by saying "even after the Brussels meeting no green light has been given to a European conference, yet the stands of the adversaries of European security and co-operation are becoming ever more untenable".

Czechoslovakia

There seems to have been no comment by Czechoslovak media.

East Germany

East Berlin radio on the 14th December regretted that the final communiqué did not reveal much of a will for an accelerated preparation of a Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Emphasis was put on the opposition between two tendencies within the Alliance in this respect. The broadcast concluded that "NATO as an organization would always try to put up obstacles on the road toward European security; but the developments of the past few years showed that these attempts may perhaps slow down, but cannot stop the advance toward European security."

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Hungary

There seems to have been no comment by Hungarian media.

Poland

On 13th December, "Glos Pracy" regretted that the tactics of accumulating reservation and delaying binding decisions had prevailed in the communiqué, as usual. There was room for optimism, however, in view of the increasing support by many States, particularly Denmark, Norway and France, for a constructive dialogue and consistent activity on behalf of peace in Europe.

Romania

There seems to have been no comment by Romanian media.

Yugoslavia

There seems to have been no comment by Yugoslav media, which were filled, during the relevant period, with reports on the Croatian crisis.