

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

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH  
23rd August, 1972

POLADS(72)29

MEMORANDUM

To: The Political Committee

From: Acting Chairman

SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN MEDIA COMMENTARIES  
ON THE NATO MINISTERIAL MEETING, MAY 1972

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

(Signed) George ANDREWS

NATO,  
1110 Brussels.

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

SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN MEDIA COMMENTS  
ON THE NATO MINISTERIAL MEETING, MAY 1972

SUMMARY

1. Soviet and East European media comment on the Bonn Ministerial meeting continued the tradition which began in December 1968 of a relatively calm and brief reaction.

2. The common theme of numerous commentaries was that the tremendous changes taking place in Europe had been somehow reflected during the Council session; this did not, however, give cause to show complacency toward NATO, which remained a military bloc directed against the socialist countries.

Soviet Union

3. The starting point for Soviet coverage of the recent Ministerial meeting was the agreement reached in the Nuclear Planning Group on the use of tactical nuclear weapons. Commentators aimed at creating the impression that NATO leaders "lived in a world of outdated concepts and wished to ignore the spirit of the times". They also stressed that increased attention had been devoted to the strengthening of the southern flank of the Alliance, which, in their view, could only prevent the easing of tension.

4. The same applied to the decision taken at the DPC meeting on holding Exercise "STRONG EXPRESS" in the Atlantic in the second half of September. In this regard, attention was focussed on the contradiction between "the biggest military manoeuvres in the whole history of NATO and the growing trend towards trust and détente".

5. In their evaluation of the results achieved by this Spring session, commentators stressed that the conference could not fail to reach conclusions dictated by the international situation or to take heed of the people's insistent demands. The main decision was to remove the former reservations and conditions advanced previously and to give the NATO countries the "go-ahead" permitting them to play a concrete and business-like part in preparation for the conference.

6. The same commentators, however, underlined that in addition to a few realistic tendencies, political and propaganda clichés of past years which contradict existing realities and the new atmosphere in Europe persisted within NATO; in particular, as on previous occasions, appeals for the continuation of "defensive efforts" were heard and there was talk about some parallelism between such efforts and international détente.

POLADS(72)29

-3-

7. In general, they developed the theme that the obstructionist influence of the war machine and the archaic character of some concepts could always be felt within NATO; echoes of old views which relied on so-called defence efforts and on the increase of armaments were still to be heard.

Albania

8. There seems to have been no comment by Albanian media.

Bulgaria

9. On the 2nd June, 1972, under the heading: "Peaceful words and militaristic demonstrations", Narodna Armia, admitted that, at first glance, the Bonn Communiqué had given a positive answer to a number of questions of vital importance to the European nations, which was a clear proof that NATO leaders had taken into consideration the recent changes in Europe. However, "some moments of the preparations and the proceedings of the session, as well as some points of the Communiqué" had shown that the "Natovites" had not laid down weapons and that they would also in future continue to oppose any understanding between European nations. Before, during and after the Ministerial session, military exercises had been taking place, remarked the article; all this rattling of weapons was said to be a new provocation against the European security, and was not considered to be in accord with the peaceful words of the Communiqué. In reality, the basic aims of the political and military strategists of NATO were to delay the relaxation of the atmosphere in Europe and seek to blackmail some members of the Alliance, such as Denmark, Norway and Iceland, the article concluded.

Czechoslovakia

10. Commenting on the NATO Defence Ministers' decision to hold combined air, naval and land exercises in September, Radio-Prague on the 31st May, lamented that "military circles of this aggressive military-political grouping of imperialist states had not reconciled themselves to a détente and continued to act in Europe as in a theatre of war".

Radio-Prague observed on the following day that the NATO Ministerial meeting would be influenced by the Soviet-US standpoint on the question of mutual reduction of troops and arms in Central Europe; however, there were differences of opinion within the Alliance on these matters and military circles were in favour of modernising NATO troops in Western Europe.

11. On the same day, the Bratislava Smena emphasised that the conclusions reached at the recent meetings held in Brussels and Bonn were almost strikingly opposite. While Defence Ministers stressed the need to further strengthen NATO's military potential, the discussions of the Ministerial Council showed that "the spirit of realism was beginning to gain ground in this forum". Although the agreement to start multilateral preparatory talks this fall must be judged as a victory for progressive forces, "there were still enough obstacles in the path of victory, such as the stressing of the US presence in Europe, the reinforcement of the Pact's military strength and its support for reactionary and fascist régimes".....

12. On the 3rd June, a commentary in Prace warned that, even if the results of this year's NATO Council session were generally positive, it would not be good to succumb to illusions. Obviously, certain Western politicians were much too deeply caught up in old concepts and ideas, although these did no longer correspond to the newly established European atmosphere.

13. Radio Prague on the 13th June, claimed that the positive attitude of the Atlantic Alliance still concealed a certain embarrassment and indecision. As emerged particularly from the speech by the Secretary General, certain influential circles of the Alliance were trying to put forth new preliminary conditions for convening the all-European Conference. The proposal to discuss the so-called free movement primarily involved an effort to fling open the gates to ideological penetration of the socialist countries. Tendencies to push for the inclusion on the Agenda of a mutual reduction of armed forces in Europe constituted an even more obvious attempt to put off the all-European Conference; as stated in the Soviet-US Communiqué, and in view of the complexity of this problem, talks on mutual force reductions should be conducted in a separate forum, and this was also the position of all member states of the Warsaw Pact.

14. On the 14th June, the Central Committee weekly Tribuna gave a communist version of what had happened at NATO meetings in Copenhagen and Bonn. The article regretted that NATO's aggressive concepts had not been abandoned and that it continued to back tendencies which are in conflict with reality and the prevailing atmosphere in Europe. The proposals of capitalist states regarding mutual and balanced force reductions had a strong propaganda element in them; in fact, it concluded, NATO's aim in the forthcoming negotiations would be to change the existing balance of forces in Europe as much as possible in its favour and to limit Soviet freedom of movement.

POLADS(72)29

-5-

East Germany

15. East German media opened their commentaries on 29th May, by asserting that NATO leading circles were trying to arouse fear of an imaginary Soviet danger in order to keep all states in the armaments race.

16. On the 2nd June, the "Voice of the GDR" underlined that, although NATO had at long last been forced to abandon its opposition to the Security Conference, "it did not sound at all like a détente or understanding when the FRG Foreign Minister made the threat to the Finnish Government that the choice of Helsinki as the venue for multilateral preparations would become problematical if Finland were to take unilateral steps to establish diplomatic relations with the GDR". It also stressed that Mr. Scheel and the US Secretary of State had demanded that the European Security Conference be linked with the problem of mutual balanced force reductions in Europe, "a problem which would of course be bound to make such a Conference much more difficult".

Hungary

17. On 28th May, Magyar Hirlap foresaw that in all probability the Bonn Communiqué would contribute to the start of an extensive preparation of a pan-European Security Conference. It recalled that the US and their European partners had declared that the era of confrontation was to be replaced by a period of negotiations and constructive co-operation: there were, however, considerable differences of opinion within this understanding related to the distribution of the common burdens, but also based on the opinion expressed in some NATO circles that the Nixon administration neglected the power positions and that this "bona fide attitude" was being abused by its enemies.

Poland

18. Polish media opened their commentaries on 29th May, by noting that only several days before the Bonn Ministerial meeting NATO Defence Ministers had decided to organize the biggest manoeuvres in the history of the Alliance in order to demonstrate their strength in the face of the all-European Conference.

19. Two articles, one of which discussed the sessions of NATO Commissions (SIC) in Brussels between 8th and 13th May, (1)

---

(1) Actually meetings of the Commissions of the North Atlantic Assembly

DECLASSIFIED/DECLASSIFIEE - PUBLIC DISCLOSED/MISE EN LECTURE PUBLIQUE

(published in the semi-official daily Zycie Warszawy on 13th May, 1972), and the other the session of NATO Nuclear Planning Group in Copenhagen (published in a daily of the socialist youth union Sztandar Mlodych on 18th May, 1972), were mainly trying to suggest that the European member countries were "getting used to the idea" of the European Security Conference and harped on the "differences of opinion" between individual members of NATO, some of whom persisted in their "cold war attitude" while the others favoured and welcomed the possibility of détente in Europe. The general tone of these articles was unusually restrained and the language completely free from any aggressive or abusive terms.

20. A radio commentary which sharply attacked the session of the Nuclear Planning Group in Copenhagen on 18th-19th May, was broadcast only on 14th June. It concluded that "the session tried to maintain a psychosis of an alleged threat from the East and ... high military budgets".

21. The problems connected with the Northern flank were discussed at great length. Under the title "Anxiety about NATO's Northern Flank", Zolnierz Wolnosci, the daily of the Ministry of Defence, revealed that NATO circles were displeased with Denmark's military and foreign policy, while the latest trends appearing in Iceland seemed to erode the "monolith which was intended to form an aggressive bloc directed against the socialist countries".

22. Another aspect of the same problem was mentioned in the semi-official daily Zycie Warszawy of the same date in an article entitled: "Norway and the Common Market", which underlined the importance of Norwegian bases for NATO.

23. The Ministerial session in Bonn caused an avalanche of speculations, comments and observations to the effect that, as a result of President Nixon's visit to Moscow and Warsaw, NATO member countries at last had agreed to participate in the preparations for a European Security Conference, which the socialist bloc had been advocating for a long time.

24. On 31st May, Zycie Warszawy remarked that "nevertheless, in many voices, such as of Gaston Thorn, Joseph Luns, and the British and Dutch Foreign Ministers, one heard the echoes of the old mistrust, the bugbear of Soviet armament, and appeals that efforts toward détente should be simultaneously accompanied by military strengthening of NATO". Two days later, the same daily made another reference to "the bad old days" and on the 1st June, Trybuna Luda, observed that "at the same time, however, the Foreign Ministers of the Atlantic Pact indirectly declared themselves against reduction of armaments". In connection with this passage, one should mention a PAP Communiqué from Washington, entitled: "The network of US military bases will remain unchanged", which appeared in Zolnierz Wolnosci on the 7th June.

POLADS(72)29

-7-

25. Additional comments on the Bonn Communiqué appeared in Zolnierz Wolnosci on the 12th June, which came to the conclusion that "the latest session of the NATO Council left many matters uncleared, and that there were great differences among particular countries resulting from their interests". A similar comment was made in the "Pax" newspaper Slowo Powszechne, on the 14th June, which drew attention to a statement made by Mr. Luns that independently of the mutual force reductions, the military power of NATO should go on strengthening.

Romania

26. There seems to have been no comment by Romanian media.

Yugoslavia

27. Under the heading "France and Manoeuvres" the Belgrade Borba commented on the announced participation of France in the NATO Naval Exercises scheduled for early September in the Mediterranean.

28. The newspaper carried the explanation given in Paris that France had participated before in manoeuvres of this type but with smaller forces. "However", writes Borba, "in this case it is not a question of manoeuvres of the earlier type and dimensions but rather manoeuvres of immense proportion which in fact will be extending to cover all the shores of Europe, from the northern most Norwegian to the island of Cyprus". Borba asks why a movement of naval forces of such proportions in an era which promises to bring a greater measure of participation?