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BRITAIN IN NATO

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ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE

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I. The New Strategic Environment

THROUGHOUT the last decade, commentators have tended to assume that, in the absence of an international control agreement, the strategic arms race will just go on and on. Soviet and American military publicists have speculated cheerfully on the merits of combat systems in space—one USAF general, for example, has listed six reasons why he thinks an American missile base on the moon would confer on the West strategic superiority. Part of the opposition to the British Polaris has rested on the contention that it will soon become useless through obsolescence. Pacifists have continually demanded general and complete disarmament tomorrow because, they have often said, the day after it may be too late.

For an arms race to be maintained, one of two conditions has to be satisfied. Either a series of technological breakthroughs have successively to render obsolete existing major weapons, or else there have to be opportunities for one side or the other to establish a worthwhile numerical superiority. Both the United States and the USSR now have installed hundreds of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) capable of accurately delivering warheads worth millions of tons of TNT. Because they depend still on liquid fuels Soviet ICBMs are expensive and cannot readily be emplaced in underground sites. But when the USSR follows the American lead and supplements or replaces liquid-driven rockets with solid fuelled ones each of the superpowers will have at their disposal weapons which, I believe, could never be significantly improved upon. No doubt military-industrial pressure groups in both countries will continue to press for the introduction of variants that incorporate marginal improvements in reliability or in other respects. To all intents and purposes, however, the technology of strategic war has become stable.

This situation will be nullified if it ever becomes practicable to create an anti-missile defence that is effective against first-class powers. But this prospect is remote. Any launching complex that was to stand any chance of intercepting a fair proportion of incoming missiles would have to include a mass of formidably expensive electronic equipment. One such complex would have to be positioned near every potential target in order to obtain a comprehensive area coverage. Fall-out protection would have to be provided for all civilians. Even an effort as great as this could be thwarted by the rival superpower increasing the number of strategic rockets at its disposal until it was able to 'saturate' each launch complex. All the indications are that one superpower could always provide the extra ICBMs required to saturate a complex for less than one tenth of the cost of the

complex itself. This is not to say that there is no justification, even *prima facie*, for the extensive anti-missile development programmes which the USA and the USSR are currently engaged upon. Anti-missile defences might have some value against the small and slow missiles that certain of the secondary powers could create. Highly sophisticated forms of anti-missile defence might, as will be noted again below, be at least partially effective against Polaris. Anti-missile missiles might also be useful for protecting the fifty or so ICBMs that would be retained as a minimum deterrent by Russia and by America if certain disarmament proposals were implemented. But nobody should imagine that either super-power stands any serious chance of affording its cities immunity from the assaults of the other.

The United States still enjoys an important strategic superiority although the margin is now dwindling. Her intercontinental bomber force is stronger, although by how much depends upon one's definition of an intercontinental bomber. Her fleet of ballistic submarines—i.e., submarines capable of firing strategic rockets such as Polaris—is superior. She currently has 900 ICBMs, whereas the USSR has around 200. The respective bomber forces were built up at a time when the USA was substantially richer in proportion to the USSR than she is today. Her lead in respect of submarines is due to greater naval experience and better underwater nuclear propulsion units and submarine-launched ballistic missiles. Her numerical advantage in ICBMs is due to the fact that the technological breakthrough to solid fuels in this sphere has given her such economies of large scale production that the USSR has so far felt unable to compete. During the 1960 to 1963 period the USSR expanded its intercontinental rocket strength only slowly and concentrated rather on building up a sizeable echelon of medium-range rockets targetted on NATO Europe. This, she obviously felt, would be a way of offsetting American ICBM strength without encouraging a crash expansion of that strength. It would have the additional advantage of compensating for NATO's advantage in terms of the number and variety of tactical nuclear weapons deployed in Central Europe.

This policy depended upon the location of Soviet ICBMs remaining unknown. For some time after the U-2 flights this policy held. It seems, however, that towards the middle of 1962 United States military space reconnaissance began to expose Soviet missile dispositions. In June of that year Mr. McNamara made his famous Ann Arbor speech in which he said that for some time ahead the USA would be able to fight any war by means of a Counterforce Strategy that consisted of confining attacks to key enemy military installations. Soviet panic reaction to this challenge could explain the sudden shipment of medium range missiles to Cuba. To say this is not to condemn the Americans for forcing those missiles out of the Caribbean—their presence there would almost certainly have enhanced the risk of accidental war within the Western Hemisphere; it is merely to say that even as recently as 1962 the danger of war through miscalculation was much greater than it is today.

The Soviet "deterrent" is more stable now than it was two years ago. In 1963 a new ICBM with a new fuelling system was introduced and this was capable of leaving its site before an incoming missile arrived. Mr. McNamara has since acknowledged that henceforward it will be absurd to think of disarming the Russians by a Counterforce blow and that damage in any continental exchange will be both heavy and bilateral. Besides, the Soviet deterrent is becoming increasingly capable of riding out a disarming blow without its ICBMs leaving the ground. At the close of 1962 the USA had about 450 rockets capable of hitting Russia and Russia about 80 capable of hitting the U.S.A. On the arbitrary but not unrealistic assumption that, on the average, each American rocket stood a 50 per cent chance of destroying a Soviet one, we can say that if the Americans had fired 250 of their missiles simultaneously they might have reduced the Soviet ICBM strength to around 10. Ten missiles might not have been capable of inflicting unacceptable damage on the USA. By 1967 the USSR is likely to have of the order of 500 ICBMs. To reduce that force to, say, 10, the Americans would need 3,000 rockets. In fact they are scheduled to have only 1,700. These comparisons are a little speculative and very imprecise but they do establish the point that the mathematics of targetting combines with the costing of anti-missile defence to ensure that between the super-powers an increasingly stable nuclear stalemate is developing.

The Effects of Stalemate

Some of the consequences of this are obviously good. The ten billion pounds the USA has spent on strategic missiles since 1961 is not an expenditure that need be repeated on anything like the same scale. War is increasingly unlikely to start through technical accident or false intelligence. Neither of the super-powers is now under much compulsion to release its deterrent on the basis of provisional radar warnings or secret service forecasts of impending attack. A corollary of this is that any nuclear war that ever starts is unlikely ever to grow into a total global exchange. At some stage along its brutal and chaotic course it is likely to be halted by mutual agreement.

How do these prospects affect the American guarantee? What bearing have they on the arguments about the retention in Western Europe of more or less independent nuclear forces by Britain and France? The Gaullists say that the erosion of American strategic supremacy is bound to mean that the Americans will be afraid to shield Western Europe from nuclear blackmail because to do so would be to invite national suicide. But what they assume, with their narrow Cartesian thought patterns, is that there are no choices open to the USA between passive acquiescence and the total destruction of the world. In fact, however, that very stability that is one of the nuclear stalemate's central features makes it possible to threaten or indulge in the piecemeal use of strategic weapons to hurt, weaken, frighten, or humiliate an opponent in order to change his will. Suppose, for example, that the Russians seized part of Western Europe. Courses

of action that might be threatened or adopted include non-lethal shows of force such as the release of dummy or low yield warheads high over remote Siberia. Other alternatives would include attacks on small cities or secondary military installations. Such attacks could consist of the delivery of warheads singly or in salvos and might or might not be preceded by specific ultimata. Applications of force of this kind would need to be synchronised with hard crisis bargaining through diplomatic channels. Nobody can say what precise form any such conflict might take nor what its result might be, but this is no reason for dismissing it as inherently less plausible than other kinds of military action. Controlled response has been widely discussed in the United States by such influential strategists as Hermann Kahn. Soviet strategic literature now also carries references to it.

The doctrine of controlled response has important implications for countries that have sought, or which may seek, independent nuclear deterrents. One of them is that one may enjoy nuclear protection without having a national nuclear force of one's own. Another is that a state that has acquired a small nuclear force may still be incapable of standing up to a big one. By gradual and limited use of nuclear weapons the latter could progressively erode the material strength of the former and, in the process, break, its will. Important graduations will always exist within the nuclear club. Five Polaris submarines would not put Britain on par with Russia.

2. The Pros and Cons of Nuclear Independence

MERRY Englanders regard Polaris as a Maypole around which they may dance. But this fact should not blind us to the worth of some of the arguments that have been, or that could be, advanced in favour of the endeavour to keep in the thermonuclear business.

Only a few years ago the leaders of both the major parties accepted the thesis that nuclear status conferred extra world influence on those that enjoyed it. Thus, on March 2nd, 1955, Lord Attlee said that such had been his experience. The Tories have reiterated that our place at the top table depends upon possession of "the Bomb". More specifically they claim that this helped Britain to bring about the partial test ban. The full history of the preliminary negotiations has yet to be written, but it does indeed appear that at one stage their momentum was sustained by British seismological testimony that served to narrow the Soviet-American divergence on the question of the number of "on site" control posts needed to monitor underground tests. This claim is not wholly invalidated by the exclusion of subterranean tests from the final treaty.

French enthusiasts for independent deterrence have argued that a nuclear power located in the centre of Europe is, *ipso facto*, better placed to defend it than one set 3,000 miles away. This contention is complementary to the one noted earlier about growing American reluctance ever to come to Europe's rescue. Both are logical developments of a widespread French belief that any nuclear war in Central Europe is bound to embrace the whole region and so trigger off against the Soviet homeland the two national deterrents contained therein. But, irrespective of the strength of the local opposition, the Russians are unlikely ever deliberately to subject Western Europe to a nuclear attack so massive as to destroy it outright. Any military initiative they ever take will have precise political ends and the particular victim will almost certainly be West Germany. Either West Berlin will be invaded or besieged or else there will be a limited ground advance into the Federal Republic or a threat to use low yield nuclear devices against selected targets within it. In none of these circumstances would geography automatically ensure that the Anglo-French deterrents provided the Germans with protection. Only the continued existence of a plenitude of tactical nuclear weapons inside Germany and of strategic ones outside it would do this. At present the vast majority of the warheads in both categories are being provided by the Americans.

The fact that it is improbable that the Russians will ever break the peace by launching a saturation nuclear attack against Western Europe does not mean that they never would feel tempted to raise the conflict towards that kind of level if initial challenges were effectively countered. Were they so tempted then what the French say about the lessening dependability of the American guarantee might be borne out. Very possibly the United States would hesitate to launch a counterstrike against Russia commensurate to a heavy Soviet bombardment of NATO Europe. For this reason European strategic forces might make the contribution to the alliance of rendering the Russians yet more reluctant than they might otherwise be to run the risk of war on a continental scale.

But, as is now almost universally realised, a purely European strategic deterrent would be a poor second best to our present alliance arrangements. For one thing transatlantic interdependence involves much informal consultation and this tends to liberalise attitudes on both sides of the ocean. American thought about the Arab World has often been more rational than European, and European thought about the Far East and the Caribbean more rational than American.

To this general consideration can be added several specific ones. Between 1961 and 1964 alone, the Americans have spent over £10,000,000,000 on their nuclear deterrent and an attempt to go it alone could mean for Europe a comparable outlay. Although entitled "European" such a deterrent would, as it is usually envisaged, ignore the legitimate security interests of Scandinavia and of Greece and Turkey. Heavy West German participation would be inevitable and this would most likely be regarded by the Russians as provocative. The propinquity of the states concerned would ease but by no means eradicate multinational command and control problems. Whilst the deterrent was being created the Soviet Union might feel free to launch or threaten a forestalling blow.

From all this, it does not follow, however, that the Anglo-French strategic forces cannot usefully be regarded as the foundations upon which a European force could be built should this ever appear necessary. NATO might not last indefinitely. America may weary of her current responsibilities. Europe might wish to dissociate itself from the USA if the latter embarked on policies in, say, Latin America or East Asia that most Europeans found repugnant. The world might become effectively a bipolar collusion between the big two to the disadvantage of the remainder. This would not be impossible, in 1807 and 1939 Russia joined hands with her most powerful rival to carve up spheres of influence. She could do so again.

All of the above arguments are ones in favour of keeping some kind of nuclear option open. Not one of them is an argument in favour of endeavouring to keep, or pretending to keep, a fully fledged independent national deterrent continuously in being.

Why Sir Alec Douglas-Home should have taken as self-evident the proposition that our nuclear policy would have no effect on the behaviour of China or France is not clear. One small atomic explosion does not commit China

to a policy of independent deterrence and, indeed, the advent of new leaders in Russia may encourage Peking to reassess its whole strategic policy. De Gaulle's France may be well nigh impervious to external influences, but De Gaulle will not last forever. There can be no doubt that, in general terms, the strongest objection to the maintenance of a national deterrent is that it encourages others to follow suit. A bipolar world might not be the best of all possible ones, but one that contained, say, 20 nuclear nations would be a great deal worse. The hazard of war through technical accident or miscalculation would be much greater. NATO would be weakened by the progressive generation of mistrust and proliferation both reflected and encouraged. At present the pressures towards proliferation are not strong. This is shown by the facts that almost all countries have signed the test ban and that the present nuclear powers are most loth to export their know-how. But this equilibrium is an essentially unstable one. Once a trend towards proliferation had set in again it might accelerate very rapidly.

Strategic Planning

Lately there has been much talk about trading in nuclear independence in order to obtain part control of some guidelines that NATO might lay down in order to advise the American President on the application of his strategic forces. These might consist either of "blueprints" prepared in anticipation of crises or else of opinions conveyed in the course of them.

That NATO needs some strategic planning authority is now obvious, but its creation is likely to be a slow and difficult operation. Little thought has yet been devoted to the form an authority might take and, in particular, to how it would resolve issues like weighted votes, unanimity, majority decisions and planning for nuclear crises which, like Cuba, originate outside the formal boundaries of NATO or which are confined to one region within the alliance. How valuable blueprints could ever be is uncertain. Strategy is a banal science and it is difficult to enunciate in the abstract principles for the conduct of war that are meaningful without being trite. If, on the other hand, one elaborated procedures for dealing with specific eventualities one would almost certainly get one's premises wrong. Multinational participation in the active management of any crisis might well be useful, but, in the ultimate, there is a difference between tendering advice and exercising authority. Executive control, which would carry with it the veto sanction, would inevitably be concentrated in the hands of the President. It would seem, therefore, whilst it might well be a good thing to trade in existing or proposed strategic forces in the sense of assigning them to the alliance, it would not be wise to dismantle them altogether. A trade-in should be a continual process and not one single and irreversible act.

Just as none of the arguments against the abandonment of independent nuclear status were arguments in favour of remaining a nuclear power on the present scale or on the present terms, so none of the arguments in favour of it are ones in favour of a complete rejection of the nuclear option. To decide what form this option should take it is necessary to examine more closely the choices now available.

3. Britain's Present Nuclear Forces

THIS country has accumulated already enough material to make about 1,500 nuclear warheads. Some are available for use by the Fleet Air Arm and by RAF tactical squadrons. Many, including most of the larger ones, are earmarked for the 180 V-Bombers, which could carry on a single trip a combined total of well over 1,000 megatons of thermonuclear explosive. Last year these Victor and Vulcan aircraft were assigned to NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe, but this assignment was made subject to the unusual qualification that they could be withdrawn in times of special national emergency. It is generally thought that the V-Bombers would be particularly useful to SACEUR as a means of delivering pinpoint attacks on river crossings.

Another £50 to £100,000,000 is due to be spent in the course of the next twelve months on the modernisation of the V-Bomber squadrons. Thenceforward the charge on the taxpayer will come simply from running costs and from occasional piecemeal modifications. The peacetime expenditure by the USAF on a tactical warplane is £300,000 per year and on a heavy strategic bomber £1,000,000. Routine operation of one of the Victors or Vulcans, which are medium strategic bombers, probably costs the RAF something over £300,000 per year. Half of this would consist of payments to air and ground crews. A flying schedule that averaged rather less than one hour per day would involve each bomber and its aerial tanker support in the annual consumption of about £100,000 worth of aviation spirit. Since the craft are packed with electronic gear and high performance machinery, approximately another £100,000 p.a. should be allowed for component replacement and modification.

How well might the V-Bombers perform in a strategic role? Basic to this question is that of whether they could ride out a Soviet disarming blow. They would seek to do this by dispersing during a period of tension to a selection of about 100 British airfields plus a few overseas. The small groups of bombers would then stand by their respective runways ready to scramble to safety distances on receipt of radar warnings of the approach of enemy missiles. Against the present echelon of Soviet medium range missiles this evasion technique would be adequate. If, however, the USSR introduced missiles that carried greater warheads or that flew faster or on lower trajectories, things would be different. So would they be if the Russians emplaced strategic missiles in Poland or Czechoslovakia or if through a marked numerical expansion they became able to bracket dispersal stations. Recourse would then have to be made to continuous airborne alerts. These would be unlikely to ensure immunity for more than one third of the force.

Nowadays deep high altitude penetration of heavily defended air space depends upon the use of electronic techniques to blind or confuse enemy radar. Because of a feeling that the West is gradually losing its superiority over the USSR in the field of military electronics, emphasis has recently switched to low level approaches. This tactic is not, of course, without its weaknesses. Potential antidotes to the low flier include short range ground-to-air weapons clustered around key objectives and long-range interceptor planes on patrol high aloft. The RAF nevertheless feels that their Victors and Vulcans will still be of strategic value in the early 1970s. Their forecast may well prove correct. For one thing the USSR may be reluctant to incur the very heavy expenditure involved in continual improvement of its anti-aircraft defences.

The Conservative unwillingness to assign to NATO without reservation any of the V-bombers was irrational. The force would be very difficult to use in a private nuclear quarrel with the Soviet Union. Manned bombers are unsuitable for limited or slow motion strategic war because their percentage prospects of getting through are much reduced if they are committed in driblets. Besides it would be virtually impossible to deliver both high and low level sorties without flying over NATO Europe.

There is, however, a case for declining to assign a small fraction of the force so that it can be held ready to deter or to fight in non-nuclear wars outside the NATO area—i.e. outside those territories and sea areas that lie within or contiguous to that part of the Atlantic basin which is North of the Tropic of Cancer; Bomber Command planes were so used in Kuwait in 1961 and in Malaysia in 1963.

A "bonus" strategic role has been claimed for the Tactical Strike and Reconnaissance-2 aircraft (TSR-2) which is due to fly with the RAF during the 1967 to 1980 period. It will be able to take off from small unprepared strips and it will be able to fly a good deal lower a great deal faster than the V-Bombers. But its tactical specification will make it rather inappropriate for strategic work in certain respects. Among them will be crew strength, fuel capacity, bombload, and the weight and variety of electric gear.

If Britain cancelled the TSR-2, disbanded the V-Bomber squadrons, and declined to purchase Polaris, would she thereby become a member of the non-nuclear club? The answer would seem to be "No". A great knowledge of thermonuclear techniques would remain and so we would be free to construct, for example, large static hydrogen bombs of the Doomsday Machine variety ready for use in indiscriminate "death-strings". We would continue to operate various aircraft that might serve as tolerably efficient nuclear delivery vehicles. Though we might demolish all our nuclear stockpile we could never conclusively prove that it had in fact been 100 per cent destroyed. Besides, nuclear weapons are not the only means of strategic conflict. There is also germ warfare and of this we have a knowledge that few other nations can rival. The debate about Polaris should be recognised as being one about comparative advantage and not about absolute choice.

4. The Bahamas Agreement

WHEN President Kennedy and Mr. Macmillan discussed at Nassau the implications of the Skybolt cancellation they agreed upon two major items of new policy. One was that they would press for the formation within NATO of what is now entitled the Multilateral Force—i.e. a fleet of a mixed manned surface ships armed with the Polaris A-3 missile, which can deliver a megaton warhead across 2,500 miles. The other was that Britain, and France should she so wish, should receive the A-3 missile “. . . on a continuing basis” so that it could be installed in nuclear-driven submarines. These submarines, it was said, would be assigned to NATO subject to a special right of withdrawal at time of national emergency.

Almost immediately France declined the A-3 offer, but soon it was announced that Britain was consolidating her claim by making an 8 per cent contribution to the \$350,000,000 adjudged necessary to complete its development. Early in 1964 the government revealed that it planned five Polaris boats, each with a battery of 16 missiles; two of these have now been laid down. The Americans will eventually supply the missile body structures and it would seem that they have tendered considerable advice on warhead construction as well. Certain important components of the submarines themselves are also to come from the United States. About half the dollar expenditure necessitated by the agreement has already been met. The forecast cost of the flotilla plus its support installations is £350,000,000. No annual operating cost estimates have been published but the actual figure will be in the £8 to £20,000,000 range. This is 15 to 30 per cent of that for the V-Bomber fleet.

The effective independence of a nuclear force is not automatically destroyed by some other nation being a source of key components. Such will only be the case when a cessation of supplies could cripple the force in time of war or could drastically curtail its effective peacetime life by precluding essential modernisation. There is, in fact, no means by which the Americans could immobilise a British Polaris force in time of crisis, however prepared they were to disregard their pledges. Remote control electronic switches are now being fitted in many American nuclear missiles, but these are designed simply to prevent unauthorised release by individual operators. Locks of this kind could never be made sophisticated enough to be used to exercise a national veto. The truth of the matter may well be that V-Bomber dependence on American space intelligence about Soviet anti-aircraft dispositions is operationally much more significant than the commercial nexus that Polaris involves.

Whether the useful life of a British national deterrent is liable ever to be shortened by the unilateral termination of the Nassau Agreements will

depend upon two things. One is the length of time missiles will keep in storage. The other is whether these missiles or any of the American-made submarine components will require constant modification. Such technical evidence as is available on the first point suggests that a missile in storage will last a good 15 years, which is, of course, comfortably in excess of the time it would take independently to develop a sophisticated substitute system. As far as the second point is concerned, it is just conceivable that Soviet advances in anti-missile techniques will necessitate periodic refinements of the Polaris warheads in order to sustain their penetration prospects. It is not, however, likely. As has been suggested above, the cost of anti-missile defences will probably preclude their general construction. Besides, Mr. Paul Nitze, the United States Secretary of the Navy, has discounted the possibility that the Russians could, in the foreseeable future, produce a screen capable of shooting down Polaris even if they were prepared to incur the expenditure required.

There is no reason to expect any sensational improvements in the methods whereby submerged submarines can be located and identified. The only serious prospect of them lies in the further application of reflected sound waves and in this field the difficulties are immense. Surveillance at ranges in excess of, say, 100 miles is only likely to be achieved through the use of the low frequency band and this is notoriously susceptible to external noise and to deliberate jamming. It is impossible to envisage a technical breakthrough that would expose five submarines dispersed underwater across millions of square miles of sea space to instantaneous destruction in a surprise attack.

If all that is wanted is a simple second strike force able to retaliate against the total destruction of the United Kingdom then a small Polaris force completed by, say, 1969 would be capable of fulfilling the role until its missiles deteriorated and its boats wore out sometime early in the 1980s. A single salvo release of all their missiles could kill about 25,000,000 Russians—assuming, of course, that no urban evacuation had taken place. But this does not mean that five Polaris submarines are any more capable than 180 V-Bombers of constituting a deterrent of the size and quality needed to conduct a slow motion strategic war against the USSR. Each boat could be picked off individually as it returned to port at the end of a two-month cruise. Besides, as Soviet commentators have been quick to point out, a submarine that fired, say, one missile would thereby reveal the position of another 15. With five Polaris boats this country would not go naked into the conference chamber; neither would it go fully clad.

In electing to build five ballistic submarines the late Conservative government apparently followed De Gaulle. His spokesmen say that France must commission five such vessels of her own design by 1972. They say that this number is the minimum that could constitute an independent second strike capacity. But is this degree of nuclear independence worth obtaining? Would not the completion of two or three British Polaris submarines be adequate for any national British or NATO purpose? Their

number could always be increased within two or three years should this be thought desirable.

The Multilateral Force

There are many objections to the Multilateral Force as it is at present conceived. The projected total of 25 ships is many times more than is necessary for establishing the multilateral principle and far exceeds any genuine military requirement. The refusal of several nations, including France and Canada, to participate at all is a source of weakness; so is the British reluctance to make more than a token contribution. The apparent fact that the Americans alone will have warhead custody will make a precipitate transfer to other hands such as West Germany, who are expected to make a 35 per cent contribution of men and resources, Vagueness about operational command and control arrangements adds to the general impression that its American sponsors have been too keen to get an MLF into commission and too disinterested in its precise terms of reference.

On July 2nd of this year Mr. Thorneycroft told the House of Commons that the Conservative government regarded the question of whether an MLF should be built as being still an open one. That he should have felt able to speak so freely after the Nassau Communique is surprising, but it is also perhaps fortunate. His proposal to NATO for an alternative mixed manned force located on land in Western Europe and equipped with tactical aircraft and land based missiles is worth continued consideration by the Labour Government. So might be any revised versions of the mixed manned fleet concept. It should be recognised, however, that none of the points in favour of a European contribution to the NATO strategic deterrent is in favour of both a multi-lateral echelon and one or more European national ones. Thus the MLF and the British Polaris flotilla could not co-exist within NATO on any rational basis.

5. The Local Defence of Germany

IN 1950 NATO decided in principle on a forward strategy and in 1962 implementation of this began. Originally adoption of this strategy was a response to, or anticipation of, West German demands that their country be defended right on its Eastern borders. Today official circles in Bonn are more interested in it as a means of dissuasion than as a means of defence. They believe that the maintenance of a NATO nuclear presence under the very shadow of the Iron Curtain provides a deterrent that is absolute by virtue of its potential power and inherent uncontrollability.

Twenty-seven divisions armed with tactical nuclear weapons have been disposed in front of the Iron Curtain. They represent NATO's attempt to reach its target level of 30 divisions. Thirty was the minimum that military analysts thought was needed to guard closely the total length of the Iron Curtain in Germany. In practical terms, however, close forward defence is unnecessary. The Red Army keeps but 20 smallish divisions in Eastern Germany and so could hardly risk even a minor foray without first undertaking substantial reinforcement. As they reinforced, so could NATO. By relating the size of its permanent garrison in Germany to geography rather than to the current strength of the opposition NATO excludes the possibility of partial disengagement and other arms reduction measures.

Many commentators on defence, and one thinks particularly of the able spokesmen on that topic among the German Social Democrats, have stressed the need to become able to conduct a stiff initial resistance without recourse to tactical nuclear weapons. They argue that a posture that allowed for this would constitute a deterrent that was the more credible for being flexible and graduated and that it would improve the chances of conducting an effective but non-suicidal defence if deterrence failed. Because it involves concentration of all divisions in one single defence zone the forward strategy would make it very difficult, and extremely hazardous, to start conventional and then go nuclear. Release of nuclear weapons without warning and without an intricate redeployment of one's own units would be to invite an uncontrolled nuclear exchange that would destroy all hope of crisis bargaining. To wait until ultimata had been issued and troops dispersed ready for a nuclear mode of combat would be to run the risk of a nuclear Pearl Harbour. This dilemma was aggravated by the official NATO enunciation in 1960 of the doctrine of "the pause". This stipulates that if an attack came nuclear weapons might be used selectively against military targets within the war zone for the twin purposes of securing military advantage and helping to strike tough crisis bargains at the political level. Military objectives would thus be confused with political ones although

they are based on different space and time criteria. Genuine political control would thereby be compromised.

A useful by-product, of the creation of crisis planning machinery within the alliance, would be that an opportunity would be presented for a revision of the local strategy. There could be, for example, a Border Command composed in peacetime of 8 to 10 non-nuclear divisions, whose function would be to deal with minor probes and other local incidents, and to observe and impede an all-out offensive. Repeated probing actions could be deterred or punished by the limited and pre-announced use of nuclear weapons against targets well outside the war zone.

Between, say, 40 and 100 miles behind the frontier could be set the boundary of a Tactical Nuclear Command. This Command, which might include in peacetime some 10 nuclear armed divisions, would be intended for frontal nuclear resistance to an all-out offensive. Its units could be dispersed and concealed ready for action as soon as the inter-command boundary was violated. Were its front breached NATO would still be free to invoke the vast might of its tactical nuclear airpower and of its strategic weapons.

Many active and reservist divisions are available to NATO elsewhere in Europe and North America and these could be used for the reinforcement of both commands during times of great tension. More emphasis on the importance of ready reserve strength and less on the size of the permanent garrison would make the new strategy one that would be quite compatible with partial disarmament schemes. But its adoption would also produce a deterrent which was well graduated but which invoked at every level the unique dissuasive power of nuclear weapons.

How can Britain earn the right to be heard on this and similar matters? By rejecting peacetime conscription Labour has resigned itself to the fact that the British Army of the Rhine will remain at about 20 per cent of the current strength of the Federal German Army and of the American army in Bavaria. But we can still, of course, fulfil some special nuclear role in NATO. We can also pay much more attention than in the past to the quality of BAOR's equipment. Our army has lagged badly behind most other ones in West and East Germany in respect of the introduction of tracked armoured personnel carriers, self-propelled field guns, and other modern weapons.

6. Conclusion

ALTHOUGH the strategic stalemate between the super-powers that is now approaching will contribute greatly to international stability, we cannot yet rule out forever the possibility of nuclear war. The USSR is now a society of much higher quality than she was before the Krushchev era began, but still she fails to provide any of the political freedoms that alone could ensure that her policies were formulated by processes of rational and enlightened public discussion; the manner of Mr. Krushchev's dismissal was an all too adequate reminder of that. All across the "Third World" poverty and factionalism interact to create many sources of potential conflict. Eruption of one or more of these could, at almost any time, precipitate a great power collision or place an unendurable strain on the United Nations. International negotiations on disarmament are still characterised chiefly by banality and humbug. No great power agreement against nuclear proliferation exists.

Central to the whole security question is the fact that if nuclear war ever occurred between major states it would most likely take the form of a limited strategic exchange. Because it would involve a use of nuclear weapons that was so discriminating that in technical terms it was inefficient, it would be a pattern of conflict in which the size and quality of the respective nuclear forces would be important, i.e. "enough" would not be sufficient. Any such war between the super-powers would probably be extremely sanguinary and its result indeterminate. Between either of them and a secondary nuclear power the contest would most likely be short-lived and its outcome decisive.

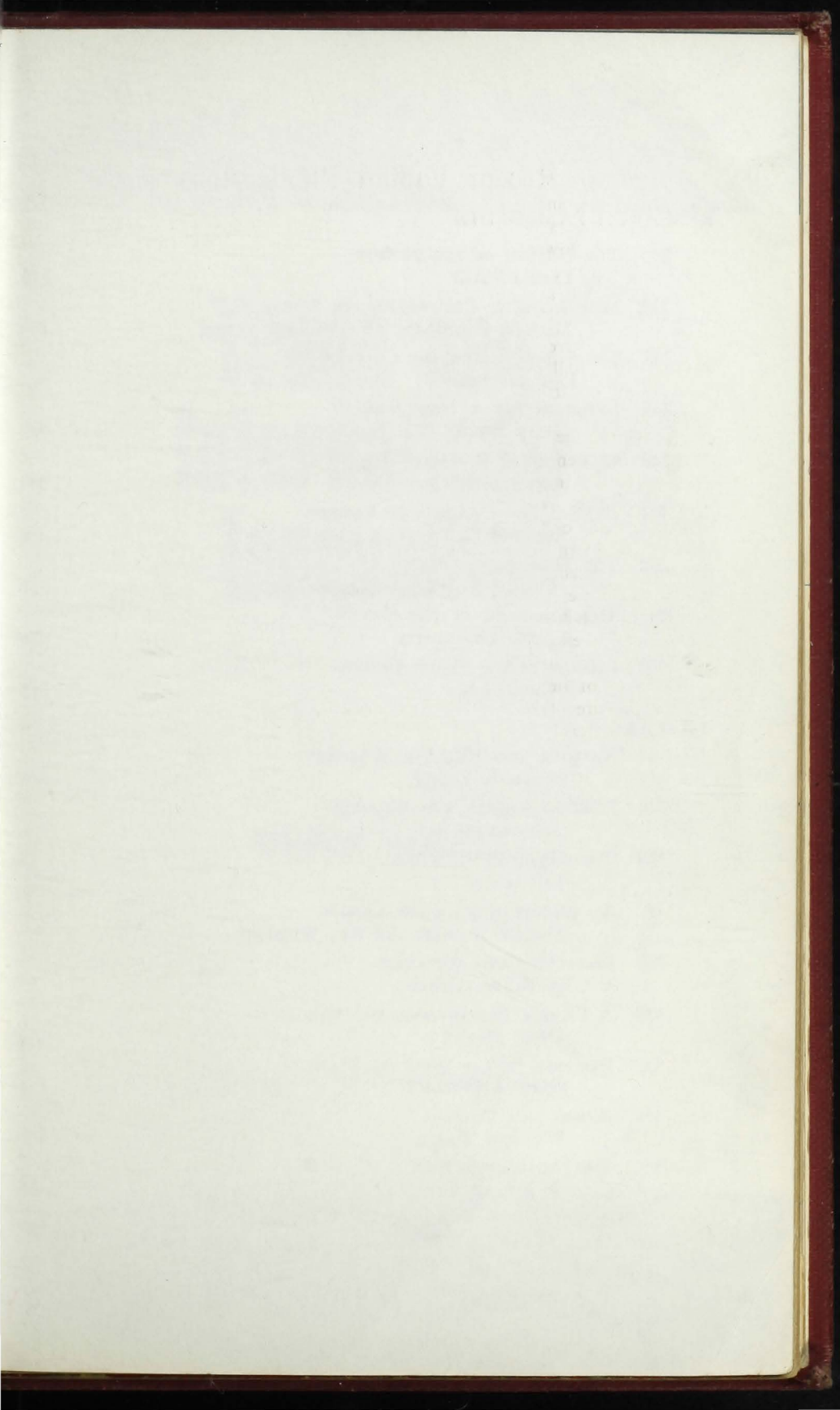
Britain may not be able to denuclearise herself but her new Labour Government both can and should reject the ambition of keeping a fully fledged national independent deterrent permanently in being. She should aim simply to retain a strategic force that, whilst of value to NATO, would be able to serve as a base for national expansion if the world situation changed. She could in this way help arrest the tendencies to nuclear proliferation and avert the risk of NATO lurching from one crisis of confidence to another until it founders in confusion. The resources thus liberated could then be spent not only upon the progressive modernisation of BAOR but also upon the helicopters, high-speed amphibious assault ships, nuclear-driven combat and logistic ships, and nuclear-driven hunter-killer submarines so urgently required by our garrisons and mobile forces East of Suez.

An effective strategic option could take the form of the V-bomber fleet or of an echelon of Polaris A-3 missiles. Of the two Polaris would be

cheaper to run and would have a better life expectancy. The current value of the V-bombers to NATO as instruments of high precision is likely soon to be overshadowed by their growing vulnerability. These large subsonic machines can be expected to become obsolete in respect of an area as densely guarded as Eastern Europe before they do in respect of the Soviet heartland.

An attractive Polaris A-3 option may yet appear in the form of a revised and smaller version of the Multilateral Fleet—with Britain, perhaps, as a major contributor and as one of the warhead custodians. Unless this happens Britain should preserve the existing contractual arrangements for the supply to her of Polaris A-3 and should establish a stock of missiles. She should then proceed with the gradual construction of two or three Polaris submarines in order that, in the 1967-70 period, they may replace the V-bombers (which can then be dismantled or "mothballed") as our thermonuclear contingent within NATO. This small squadron might be associated for operational purposes with a mixed manned land force or with the three United States Polaris submarines that have already been assigned to the Supreme Allied Commander. They might, alternatively, be integrated with a French force of a similar type and size—such a relationship would be a natural extension of the present Anglo-French co-operation in plane and missile production and in anti-aircraft defence. It might be an appropriate way of helping a post-Gaullist regime in Paris to ease France out of the posture of nuclear sovereignty that the General will have left it in. It might, alternatively, discourage a Franco-German nuclear axis. Some 60 to 100 strategic rockets installed in European submarines would be numerically trivial compared to over 1,700 US strategic missiles, but their deterrent value and their political value would be much more than proportionate.

Absolute assignment to NATO of a reduced British nuclear deterrent would make the atmosphere favourable for alliance talks on strategic co-ordination. The machinery to ensure this would take months to establish and years to perfect, but its creation may well be a pre-condition of NATO survival. It would certainly be the essential prelude to the adoption of a more flexible local defence strategy in Germany. The importance of such a strategy as, among other things, the basis for partial disarmament cannot be overstressed. Some of us are getting a little bored with the Utopian approach that still dominates this field—with, for example, projects for General and Complete Disarmament within the next five years. All such schemes are anti-pragmatic and anti-evolutionary and, on that account, totally un-Fabian. What is needed in this first instance is a variety of limited agreements starting in Central Europe. No government is better equipped than the Labour Government now in power to lead the West in thought about and action on this important matter.



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