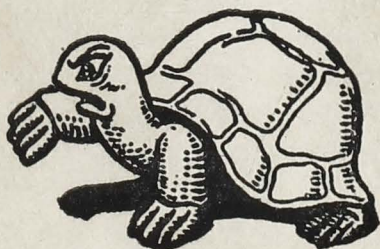


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Fabian International Bureau

# A NEUTRAL BELT IN EUROPE?

DENIS HEALEY, MP



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*ONE SHILLING AND THREEPENCE*

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# A NEUTRAL BELT IN EUROPE ?

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## 1. THE CASE FOR DISENGAGEMENT

**I**N MY OPINION the next phase in world politics will be dominated by the impact of three new factors. First of all, the development of long range nuclear weapons and their distribution over an increasing number of nation states. Secondly, the decay of international communism as an instrument of Russian foreign policy — not necessarily decay as such, but its decay as a tool of Russian policy. And thirdly, the appearance of new centres of power and political initiative outside Washington and Moscow.

What I want to do tonight is to examine the impact of these three fundamental changes on the European situation, and to suggest how the West should adapt its policy in order to take account of them. Twelve months ago, a great variety of people felt that the existing *status quo* in Europe was likely to be permanent, and that on the whole it was fairly acceptable. The fact that Europe was divided into two camps and that the dividing line ran through the centre of Germany was welcomed by many people, including even some Germans, on the grounds that the division of Germany between two power blocs was the best guarantee that Germany would never again disturb the peace of Europe. And the confrontation of American and Soviet troops on the dividing line was also welcomed by many people because it was generally held that world peace depended on a balance of mutual terror, that the threat of massive retaliation was the most effective deterrent against aggression, and that this threat would only be convincing if the powers which had the capacity for massive retaliation were certain to be immediately and directly involved by any violation of the *status quo*. So that you had this double situation : on the one hand, Germany apparently divided for ever, and therefore no longer a dangerous factor in European politics; on the other hand, through the confrontation of American and Russian troops, the certainty that any aggression in central Europe would lead to massive retaliation; and therefore no aggression would take place.

### **The Lessons of Hungary**

In my opinion, events in the last twelve months have thrown doubt on whether the existing European settlement is likely to be lasting and also on whether it is a desirable settlement even if it does last.

Two tremendous things have happened in the last twelve months — the decay of Communism in Europe, and the development by the Soviet Union of long-range thermo-nuclear striking power, or, to use a word to symbolise each change, Hungary and the Sputnik.

The Hungarian revolution and its suppression by the Red Army twelve months ago wakened the moral conscience of the West, and made many decent people wonder whether a European settlement could be a desirable one if it was based on the suppression of freedom-loving peoples by a hated army. But the Hungarian revolution also revealed that if the peoples of Eastern Europe were ever to achieve their freedom, they could only do so by peaceful means. The thermo-nuclear stalemate has closed all roads to liberation except diplomacy.

Hungary also, I think, gave us a warning. It showed that war might start in Europe, not as a result of a decision by a great power to commit aggression, but by a process of what you might call spontaneous combustion through a local explosion which involved a great power against its will, and then perhaps involved other great powers. In the case of Hungary there was never, I think, any possibility that the West was likely to intervene by force to help the Hungarians, and so find itself directly fighting Soviet troops. But people have come to realise that a situation would easily develop in the future in Eastern Europe which might involve the West as well as the Soviet Union in fighting, whether the West wishes it or not.

### **Precarious Peace**

The most obvious case, which has been much discussed by governments in the last twelve months, would be a rising in Eastern Germany, suppressed by the Red Army, at a time when the West German forces were fully mobilised along the Iron Curtain and perhaps possessed tactical atomic weapons. Nobody can confidently say that if thousands of defeated East Germans were driven by the Red Army up against the Iron Curtain their West German brothers would not come physically to their assistance.

And there are other possibilities of war arising out of the present situation. When Tito dies, as he will some day, there might be the possibility of civil war inside Yugoslavia and of outside intervention. And it would be unwise to rule out the possibility that at some stage in the next few years Polish relations with the Soviet Union might become so strained that the Soviet Union might make a threat of force against Poland in order to get her way, and Poland might appeal for military help to the United Nations — help which she has every right to receive under the Charter.

In other words, so long as the Red Army is occupying the whole of Eastern Europe, there is a time bomb at the very core of the existing European settlement. The most important factor about this situation is that a military strategy of deterrence is completely irrelevant to it. It is possible to deter a rational and self-controlled government from taking action which is certain to be disastrous to it; but it is not possible to deter ordinary men and women who are subjected to intolerable economic and political strains from rebelling against these strains and using force to get their way. That essentially is the problem and the threat presented not only to the Russians but also to the West and to world peace as a whole, by the Red Army's occupation of Eastern Europe. It is a danger to which, as I say, the Western strategy of deterrence is totally irrelevant. Not only that, but if in fact

fighting does break out, a strategy of massive retaliation, which we all know to be suicidal, is totally inappropriate for dealing with it. And that leads to the second big change in the world situation during the last twelve months.

### **The Lessons of the Sputnik**

This change is that the United States and her European allies have become conscious that it is impossible to unleash thermo-nuclear retaliation against the Soviet Union without suffering crippling destruction in return. The Sputnik has simply underlined this lesson. It has not really changed the situation, because the Russians have been capable of dropping megaton bombs on the United States for over a year; but it has brought this fact home to American opinion. Indeed the situation is even a little worse than that, because not only has the Soviet Union the power to inflict thermo-nuclear counter-retaliation on the United States; her sea power also gives her the capacity for separating Europe with all the NATO forces including the American troops from their essential bases of supply on the other side of the Atlantic.

As a result the American government in the last month or so has taken the initiative in asking the whole of the Western alliance to consider alternatives to massive thermo-nuclear retaliation. Mr. Dulles' article in the October number of *Foreign Affairs* suggests as an alternative the local defence of territory by limited atomic warfare, rather than all-out thermo-nuclear warfare to destroy the Soviet Union itself.

The Western Governments are still discussing whether there is an alternative to massive retaliation in the NATO area, and if so what it is. I have a feeling that this is one of the topics on which Mr. Macmillan and Mr. Dulles disagreed in their recent talks in Washington. Because, oddly enough, the British government has picked up the slogan of massive retaliation just at the moment when the American government has thrown it away.

### **Limited Atomic War**

And, of course, from the point of view of the European members of NATO, there are very strong arguments against the strategy of defence by limited atomic war. The only limited atomic wars which have been fought in exercises so far — Exercise *Carte Blanche* in Germany and Exercise *Sage Brush* in Louisiana — involved the total destruction of life in the areas concerned. A strategy which necessarily involves the atomic annihilation of the country which is attacked, and which the alliance exists to defend, is not an attractive policy to the countries in the front line, however attractive it may be to those in the rear.

So inevitably the Europeans are beginning to demand a purely conventional defence as an alternative to limited atomic warfare. The European countries are feeling their way towards an increase in the number of conventional forces on the frontier, so that they are capable of dispensing wholly with atomic weapons in dealing with any minor war which may arise either through a deliberate Communist incursion or through a spontaneous explosion of the type to which I referred earlier.

But that, too, raises great problems. The British and American governments have already decided that they are going to reorganise and re-equip all their NATO forces so that they can only fight with atomic weapons. And it is very difficult to see how you can have, side by side on the same front, forces which can only fight with atomic weapons and forces which can only fight without them. It seems to me that Western defence planning has, in consequence, fallen into a state of almost total paralysis. Uncertainty about the strategy which the alliance possesses for the defence of its members is now corroding the alliance at its very heart.

### The Idea of Disengagement

What is the conclusion to be drawn from the impact of these two factors — the Hungarian revolution and the Soviet Union's development of thermonuclear striking power? It is, first, that the existing *status quo* in Europe is inherently unstable, and, secondly, that if this instability leads to an armed conflict, there is at present no obvious military means of preventing this from leading to total global war. And the question to which we must all address ourselves is this: is there any practicable alternative to the existing *status quo* in Europe which gives a prospect of greater stability and of less disastrous consequences if the stability breaks down?

Because the main cause of instability of the existing situation arises from the hostility of the peoples of Eastern Europe to occupation by the Red Army and to all that this involves in Soviet control of their policies, I think you can only get greater stability if you can get the Red Army withdrawn, so that Germany can be reunited, and the satellite countries to the east of Germany can achieve greater national independence.

On the other hand, as we have already seen, you can only produce any change in the *status quo* by agreement with the Russians. Any agreement with the Russians has got to involve concessions by the West parallel to those made by the Soviet Union. Consequently the answer must involve a reciprocal withdrawal of Western forces and Soviet forces from the existing Iron Curtain with mutual control of the area thus exposed; in other words the neutralisation of at least Central Europe. That is what it involves in practice, no matter what words we use.

The idea of disengagement in Central Europe as an alternative to the Iron Curtain is almost as old as the Iron Curtain itself. The last time it was seriously advanced by a Western government was when Sir Anthony Eden put it forward at the Geneva Conference in 1955. He suggested it might be possible to agree on an area with no armaments at all right in the middle of Europe, and on either side of that a zone of limited armaments under inspection and control by both sides. But the suggestion he made at the Geneva conference two years ago was conditional. The conditions were that there should first be free elections in the whole of Germany and that the resulting all-German government should decide what course it should take in foreign policy — though it is obvious that the second condition was implicitly nullified by the idea that a united Germany should fall into this area of limited armaments.

It is easy enough to see why two years ago Sir Anthony made free elections a pre-condition of disengagement. At that time, it was generally believed in the West that all the Communist parties in Eastern Europe were absolutely subservient to the Soviet Union, and that therefore withdrawal of the Red Army would mean nothing so long as the Communist regimes survived; the places left vacant by the Red Army would soon be filled by local troops which were under Soviet orders through the Communist Party network — Marshal Rokossovsky's position as the Polish Minister of Defence appeared to prove this assumption.

Consequently, ever since Potsdam the West has made free elections in Eastern Europe the first condition of any agreement with the Soviet Union. But I believe that the events last year have shown that this is no longer a necessary condition. What happened in Hungary, and what happened in Poland, showed beyond any doubt that if the Red Army is removed from Eastern Europe, the Communist parties there will no longer be simply passive instruments of Soviet policy.

### **The Decay of Centralised Communism**

And here we come to the second great factor I mentioned right at the beginning, which is going increasingly to influence world affairs in the years to come: the decay of international Communism as a centralised system primarily devoted to pursuing the interests of the Soviet state. This decay, of course, began with Yugoslavia's secession from the Cominform in 1948, and was carried further by the victory of the Chinese Communist Party on the Chinese mainland in 1949. But I think what has happened since Stalin's death has carried the process very much further still. In the first place, an essential element in Soviet control of foreign Communist parties was the local secret police, which was under direct physical control by the Soviet secret police. When Krushchev liquidated Beria he also dismantled Beria's international police empire. You will remember how in consequence many Soviet secret police agents defected to the West. Thus the main physical instrument by which the Soviet Union controlled foreign Communist parties has disappeared.

Second to the physical instrument — indeed, perhaps more important still to Soviet control of foreign Communist parties — is the religious loyalty of Communists to what I hope I can call without offence a Vatican in Moscow. That type of centralised clerical control demands an absolute acceptance of the infallibility of the central authority. Once doubt is cast on that infallibility, the whole structure begins to disintegrate. At the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in February 1956, Krushchev did a thing which has never happened in any other similar clerical system — as the reigning pope he made an *ex cathedra* denunciation of papal infallibility. Once you have done that, nothing in the world can re-establish the doctrine. The very fact that he made this statement, whether right or wrong proves that the pope is not infallible. In my opinion, Krushchev's speech at the 20th Congress has knocked the linch-pin out of international Communism as an instrument of Soviet policy. We have seen the consequences all over the Communist world in the last twelve months.

And the third factor, which is speeding this process up, is that there are now alternatives to Moscow as centres for Communist loyalty. There is Peking — China has already tried to establish some ideological authority even in Eastern Europe. And inside Eastern Europe, there are the independent national Communist systems of Yugoslavia and Poland, both of which exercise some attraction on Communists outside their frontiers. For these reasons I think it can be taken for granted that if you could get the Red Army out of Eastern Europe and convince the people of Eastern Europe that it would not come back — this, of course, is equally important — then the Eastern European countries would cease to be under direct Soviet control, although for various reasons most of them would still remain friendly to the Soviet Union and most of them would retain many of the political, economic and social characteristics of a Communist society.

### **The Red Army**

Thus, since the events of autumn 1956, the Western powers have had a tremendous incentive to get the Red Army out of Eastern Europe and to make concessions to that end, on condition that they can make sure that it stays out. The Russians, of course, are in exactly the opposite position. They have a big incentive to keep the Red Army in Eastern Europe, unless they can ensure that the liberated zone is neutral and can be kept neutral. The Western problem, assuming that you get a disengagement and a neutral zone between the Soviet Union and the West, is essentially to protect the neutral zone from physical aggression — from a violation of its neutrality by the return of the Red Army. But the Soviet problem is to secure the neutral zone against the voluntary secession of one of its members to the West — against a violation of its neutrality by the governments of the zone itself, with the consent of the Western powers.

If you are ever going to get agreement on disengagement and a neutral zone, which, for the reasons I have already given, I think is highly desirable, you must find the answer to three questions. First of all, what will be the geographical limits of the neutral zone, what particular countries will compose it? Secondly, what limitations will you impose on its armaments, and how will you ensure that those limitations are maintained? — this is essentially a disarmament problem. Thirdly, and in the last resort most important of all, what sanctions are possible against a peaceful or forcible violation of the zone's neutrality? Unless you can satisfy both the West and the Russians that there is a practical way of intervening to prevent a violation of the zone's neutrality, both sides are likely to feel that the new situation would be less stable and less secure than the existing one.



## 2. A PLAN FOR DISENGAGEMENT

**W**HAT I am going to do now is to put forward a model for a neutral belt in the middle of Europe. I fully admit that it is not the only model which we can construct. But I think that if you are seriously concerned to advocate a policy of disengagement you have got to work it out in some detail. It is no good saying, like the German Social Democrats, that you want a European Security Pact and then not being able to answer the first question about who is in it, how it operates, what military forces are involved and how they would be used in case of emergency. You have got to be able to answer these concrete questions. But, as I say, I fully admit that the model I am going to put forward is not the only possible one, and it may well be defective in certain respects.

### Geographical Limits of a Neutral Belt

I do not believe it would be wise to aim at neutralising Germany alone, as has been suggested by many in the past, including Sir Winston Churchill in his speech at Aachen.

In the first place this would mean much greater concessions by the West than by the Soviet Union. The Federal Republic is nearly three times larger and more populous than the Soviet zone of Germany—and many times more wealthy. The manpower and territory of the Federal Republic are at the moment vital to NATO's strategy, whereas East German territory and resources are only marginal to Soviet strategy.

In my opinion the political case against neutralising Germany alone is even stronger than the purely military one. If you had a neutral Germany which was actually next door to the Soviet Union—which had Soviet power, the Soviet policy, the Soviet empire, immediately on its Eastern flank—then I think it would be too easy for some future German government to make a deal with the Soviet Union without Western agreement and mainly, of course, at the expense of Poland. Indeed, so long as the Polish-German frontier is not settled by the free agreement of an independent Polish and an independent German government, the Soviet Union has a trump card, through her occupation of Poland, to play for the allegiance of Germany. This second reason, I think, is absolutely decisive; if you try to neutralise Germany alone, you put Germany in the one situation in which she could exploit her bargaining power to upset whatever *status quo* is agreed.

### A Foothold in Europe

It is vital, I think, if you have a neutral zone which includes the whole of Germany, that it should also include countries east of Germany, which could form both a counter weight to Germany inside the neutral area and would constitute a physical as well as a political barrier to direct contact between Germany and the Soviet Union.

So that I don't think you could restrict the zone to Germany alone. A surprising number of people have suggested that you should neutralise the

whole of continental Europe. Not only Mr. Krushchev, but Sir John Slessor and Mr. George Kennan, have both at various times in the last few years suggested that the West could afford to accept what in effect the Russians have proposed, that is to say, the complete withdrawal of British and American forces from Western Europe in return for the complete withdrawal of the Red Army from Eastern Europe. Sir John Slessor has described this particular proposal as 'an air Locarno'. Now the weaknesses about that are two. Once again the West would be giving up far more than the Russians. Because once the British and American forces left the continent, and their bases left the continent, the British would go back across the North Sea, the Americans across the Atlantic, whereas the Russians would simply withdraw 500 miles across land to their own country. The disparity between the ease with which the Russians could return and that with which the West could return would be too great. And consequently, the only Western sanction against a Soviet violation of Europe's neutrality would be massive retaliation, because the West would not be in a physical position to do anything to counter a Soviet advance other than drop H-bombs on the Soviet Union itself.

Now, as I have already said, I do not think that a policy of massive retaliation — involving race suicide as well as the destruction of the country which initiates it — is a practical policy, quite apart from the fact that it is grossly immoral. And if a policy of massive retaliation is not a practical policy for defending an ally, it is certainly not a practical policy for defending a neutral. It seems to me that the great weakness of Sir John Slessor's proposal for an air Locarno is that it is inconceivable that Britain or the United States would expose their own territory to thermo-nuclear annihilation simply because there had been an infringement of the neutrality of an area in which they had no longer any direct physical involvement at all. If you are going to have an effective military sanction to protect the neutral belt, the West will have to keep a foothold on the continent of Europe from which it can exert military power short of total war.

I think the most obvious line for constructing a neutral belt would have to include the Federal Republic on the western side and Eastern Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary on the Soviet side; and then, in addition, as many other states as you could get in by bargaining. It might be, for example, that you could bring in Denmark against Rumania, and so on. But you would have to guarantee some physical foothold on the continent for the West as a base for military sanctions against a possible military violation of the neutral zone by the Soviet Union.

### **Limitation and Control of Armaments**

The second question is what arms should the countries in the neutral belt have and how should their arms be kept within the limits agreed. I think it is obvious that you could not afford to allow countries in the neutral zone any atomic weapons. A country with the power for thermo-nuclear attack and probably even with the power for small scale atomic attack has total freedom in its foreign policy. If it wants to blackmail other countries

— even large countries — it probably can. If you are going to keep the countries in the middle neutral, it means that you cannot give them that freedom *vis-a-vis* the guaranteeing powers outside. The Soviet Union would insist on that, and I think we should be wise to insist on it too. On the other hand, though these countries shouldn't have atomic weapons, I think they would have to have quite substantial conventional forces. They would have to have enough conventional forces to defend their frontiers against a local infraction, an infraction which is not serious enough to call in whatever external sanction may be envisaged to deal with a violation of neutrality. And, very much the same as NATO today, they must have conventional forces which are large enough to prevent a rapid *fait accompli* by the Russians, which would face the West with the alternative between starting up the war again or letting the thing go. In other words they would have to be able to start the fighting and to keep it going some time if there was a Soviet invasion. So I think you would have to have substantial conventional forces in the neutral area.

The question of how you control and inspect the limitations which are agreed is a soluble one. If it isn't soluble, then of course all the discussions that have taken place on disarmament in history are nonsense. But I believe that you could in fact have effective inspection by the Russians and the West of the armaments in the neutral zone by ground control teams along the lines that were discussed in the Disarmament Sub-Committee last summer. In addition to that I think you would allow the Russians to move their radar system to the western frontier of the neutral zone, and the West to move its radar system to the eastern frontier of the neutral zone. In addition, if it is still relevant after the development of earth satellites, you would have a system of aerial inspection beyond the frontiers of the neutral zone, including most of Britain and some part of European Russia. This would give you substantial protection against a surprise attack by either side. All these provisions were under serious discussion between Russia and the West this year.

### Military Sanctions

The most difficult problem, it seems to me, and the one on which I confess I haven't been able to come to a conclusion which satisfies me fully, is this: assuming you have a neutral zone with limited armaments and mutual inspection, and then, in spite of that, a country on one side or the other tries to violate the neutral zone, either peacefully or by war, what physical sanctions could you impose to compel withdrawal? Alternatively, what military deterrent could you offer against an attempt at such a violation? My own opinion is that you could not really rely on the threat of massive thermo-nuclear retaliation to protect the neutral zone. Indeed it is doubtful if we shall be able much longer to rely on it even to protect some of our allies. This raises the whole question of the possibility of limited warfare and in particular the possibility of limited nuclear warfare.

What I think you must aim at is replacing the deterrent of thermo-nuclear annihilation in all-out war by what I would call the disincentive of punishment in limited atomic war. In other words, instead of threatening the other

side that you will blow the world up if he moves, you simply say: if you move, we will hit you so hard that it will cost you more to keep on fighting than you can possibly gain by carrying your aggression through to the end. Of course, this type of limited disincentive may not be a deterrent to all-out war; it may be that the capacity for massive retaliation is the only final deterrent to all-out war; but we assume that this capacity does remain in existence on both sides. Indeed its existence gives the best guarantee that if an armed conflict does break out, both sides will try to keep it limited.

If you want to deter limited aggression into the neutral area, then I think you must have the capacity for limited retaliation and this will involve, I am sure, the limited use of atomic weapons from air bases in Western Europe and possibly also from missile bases in Western Europe on our side, and conversely, of course, for the Russians. This is a frightfully difficult problem; it is probably the most difficult problem in the history of modern defence policy, but it is a problem that must be solved, and I think that the Western governments, whatever their diplomatic policies for Europe, are going to spend most of the next five or ten years trying to solve it. The problem of limited war is just as urgent and important for NATO in the present situation as it would be for what remains of NATO under this new European settlement.

### **An Alternative to Massive Retaliation**

Somehow or other we must find an alternative to massive retaliation which is still an effective deterrent to local aggression, and which if the deterrent fails makes it possible to smother a local war without suddenly expanding it into all-out war. It is, as I say, the essential military problem for NATO today, when Europe is divided, just as much as it would be if we had a European neutral belt. *Then why change system*

Although the problem of finding a deterrent which is both severe and convincing, because it does not mean suicide, is the same in principle for protecting Western Europe today, in practice it is very much simpler if you have a neutral belt. The biggest problem that NATO faces today in a divided Europe is that there is just not enough room on this side of the Iron Curtain to organise any sort of defence in depth at all. The Iron Curtain is too far west. But if you had a neutral belt, the fighting, if fighting began, would begin on the Soviet frontier, and you would have a buffer of substantial conventional forces to cross before you got to the atomic forces of the West. If there is a solution to this problem, as I believe there is, it is easier to find it if you have this conventional arms buffer between the Soviet Union and the West, starting at the Soviet frontier, than it is if you have a general mingling of nuclear and conventional weapons, starting in the middle of Europe, as at the moment. Moreover, the risks of world war starting from spontaneous combustion in Central Europe are infinitely less if the whole of Central Europe is limited to conventional arms. And I think it is also worth pointing out that, as time passes, both the Soviet Union and the West will have less and less of a military incentive to violate the neutral area. In so far as they are worried about one another's aggressive intentions, they are

worrying more about long-range missile attack, and of course, who occupies what part of Europe is becoming increasingly irrelevant there. If they are really worried about one another's intentions, then they won't worry so much about the middle of Europe. The real fight will be in the laboratories of their homelands, rather than in the territories between them.

### The Soviet Union's Interest in Disengagement

I believe that the sort of considerations I have put forward make a very strong case for the West to take the initiative in proposing a disengagement in central Europe along these lines. The big question is whether the Soviet Union would be prepared to negotiate seriously for such a settlement. The Soviet leaders have said they would, about once every two months, for the last two years. We have never taken up their proposals, and so we have not been able to find out whether or not they are sincere. But it is at least a starting point that they have said that they want to talk about this. In fact, on one occasion Krushchev, who, I admit, does not always guard his words as carefully as he might, actually suggested a neutral zone along the sort of lines I have suggested. That is to say, if Western troops would only leave the Federal Republic, the Red Army would be prepared to leave the whole of Eastern Europe. Perhaps this was one of Krushchev's *obiter dicta*; one does not know how seriously one should take it.

Why?  
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But I do believe that the Soviet interest in staying in Eastern Europe is dwindling all the time. In the first place, the events of autumn 1956 showed that the satellites are not a source of military strength to the Soviet Union but a source of military danger. During the Hungarian revolution, there was considerable fraternisation between the Hungarian rebels and the Red Army. As you know, the Russians were unable to organise effective intervention until they had replaced almost the whole of their occupation forces by new troops, mainly from central Asia. The satellite manpower is not a military asset to the Soviet Union. There is evidence that since last year the Russians have been systematically starving the satellite armies because they don't regard them as reliable.

### Economic Factors

In the second place, the Russians know that they cannot hope to prevent another explosion in eastern Europe unless they prevent the economic suffering of the people from becoming too great. Consequently, since the events of 1956, the Russians have probably been giving more economically to Eastern Europe than they have been getting. This is a complete reversal of the situation ever since 1944. The Soviet economic and military interest in staying in Eastern Europe is nothing like as great as it was a few years ago. For that reason they might be prepared to consider leaving Eastern Europe, providing it was within a system which gave them the sort of military safeguards which I have been describing. On the other hand, fear of change, conservatism in the Foreign Office and the Army are probably just as powerful a force in the Soviet Union as in Britain and the United States. Perhaps the situation may be a little easier now that Zhukov has gone, because what little one does know about Zhukov's personal views suggest that he would not be prepared to withdraw the Red Army

from any of its existing positions, nor would he be prepared to consider any strategy other than all-out war. But the evidence is too poor to be conclusive.

My own opinion is that the dwindling of the Soviet Union's interest in Eastern Europe may not by itself be sufficient to induce the Russians to negotiate seriously about a neutral belt. What may finally turn the scale in favour of negotiations is the fear that unless the Soviet Union can organise a completely new sort of European settlement with Western agreement, each of the Western countries on the Soviet frontier will be equipped with atomic weapons. And I would venture to predict that within the next twelve months there will be serious public discussion about giving atomic weapons to Western Germany. And as that discussion approaches the point of decision, I think the Russians will make a really serious attempt to reach an alternative settlement of the whole European situation. It may well take the fear of a nuclear-armed Germany to force the Russians to consider so drastic a revision of their European policy as a whole. And unless the Western governments show far more imagination, I would expect to see the first real spasm of negotiation on this issue develop in one or two years' time.

### **A Pilot Scheme for Disarmament**

I think it is worth pointing out at this stage that what we are really discussing is what is often called disarmament, but is really the limitation of armaments. It is the same sort of problem that the Disarmament Sub-Committee has been discussing in the last few years. That is to say, a situation in which you try to reduce the level of armaments while maintaining the same balance of military power between the opposing groups. I believe some general factors will come into play to promote progress on both sides towards negotiation on disarmament. First of all, some agreement on arms limitation is immediately desirable for economic reasons. The cost of new weapons is increasing in geometric progression, on both sides. In the second place, providing that countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain adapt their strategy to meet the demands and possibilities of the new weapons, I think you can produce a situation in which war can be abolished altogether in so far as the deterrence of calculated aggression is concerned. There isn't much point in having a lot of arms if no situation is ever likely to arise in which you can use them either physically or diplomatically — by threatening to use them physically.

I think the Soviet Union and America at least, as the two countries which are most concerned with the arms race, have realised this already, and that is why they gingerly started getting to grips this year in the Disarmament Sub-Committee for the first time. But I think what has happened in the Disarmament Sub-Committee this year has underlined two lessons. Firstly, I don't believe the great powers will accept a disarmament agreement which involves control of their own internal affairs until the effectiveness of control has been proved on the little powers first. It seems to me absurd to imagine that the Soviet Union and the United States will agree to receive one

another's spies in their own atomic arms installations before they have first satisfied themselves in practice that this type of control can be made to work. They can only satisfy themselves of this through a pilot scheme in other countries.

### **Danger on the Periphery**

Secondly, I think that the dislocations and the changes in attitude involved in any effective arms inspection and control are so great that countries are not going to agree to it except in areas and on issues where there is a very great danger unless you have arms control. Nobody believes there is very much danger of either America or the Soviet Union starting an all-out thermo-nuclear war. In this sense people are less afraid of an H-bomb attack than ever before, because it is so obviously suicidal to the attacker as well as the attacked. Moreover, once you have got missiles you can put in submarines and hide in the ground there is no possibility of any surprise attack destroying the enemy's capacity to retaliate. What the big powers are worried about — and they are the powers, of course, which count most in disarmament negotiations, and they are the powers most engaged in the arms race — what they fear most is a war starting without their volition in a dangerous unstable peripheral area between them. Therefore the process of arms limitation and control will have to start in these peripheral areas. The two obvious areas are, of course, Central Europe, which we have been discussing, and the Middle East.

I think it is increasingly recognised by the big powers that the problem of preventing war now is essentially the problem of preventing small wars and, if small wars do break out, of preventing small wars from turning into big wars. That problem can only be solved by mutual agreement and I think that a European neutral zone along the lines I have discussed would be an admirable start, as a precedent for other such agreements.

### 3. SOME OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

I HAVE put the case for a neutral zone. I want to end by putting the case against it and trying to answer it. I have discussed these ideas with people from many countries in the last few years. It is remarkable how uniform is the reaction of most of their opponents. They start by arguing that such a solution would be disastrous to the West, and when they have to admit the contrary, they then argue that there is no chance of the Russians agreeing, since it would be disastrous to the Soviet Union. They want to have it both ways because they are psychologically frightened to think about any change in the present situation, even though they admit the present situation is dangerous and unsatisfactory.

In fact there is only one complaint against trying to negotiate disengagement and the creation of a neutral zone which seems to me to have great force, and it is a serious one which must be answered. It is the fear that the process of negotiations itself would so weaken NATO's solidarity and undermine NATO's will to make sacrifices for defence that the Russians would be able to achieve their primary objective of weakening and dividing the West simply by dragging the negotiations out, without any intention of making compromises to reach agreement in the end. We have many examples since the end of the war of the Russians using negotiations simply to divide and confuse their opponents and to delay effective resistance. There is no doubt that this is a real danger.

#### **Bilateral Approaches**

I would reply that precisely because this danger is a real one the West must begin now to work out a collective allied approach to the problem. Otherwise the Soviet Union will choose her time to make bilateral approaches to one or the other of the Western powers, presenting whatever specific proposal for disengagement is best calculated to divide the object of its approaches from its allies. We may have seen signs of such a bilateral approach to the United States during the disarmament discussions this year, when Mr. Stassen's behaviour produced howls of alarm in Europe and complaints of a new Yalta in the making. A direct Soviet approach to Western Germany is equally likely as the German disenchantment with NATO gathers strength. France is another obvious target for bilateral negotiations.

That is why I feel it is essential to start public discussion of the problem immediately inside the Western alliance. It is most important that when the bargaining begins the Western peoples should be sufficiently familiar with the issues involved to know what is negotiable and what is not. And it is highly desirable that the bargaining should begin as the result of a Western initiative so that the Western proposals form the basis of negotiation. We are continually put in an unfavourable position from the start because we



wait for the Russians to take the initiative and put us on the diplomatic defensive.

The second element in my reply is that NATO is disintegrating now, in front of our very eyes. And the reason is not that we are negotiating with the Soviet Union on disengagement, but exactly the contrary. NATO remains frozen in the rigid posture it adopted in the days of Stalin. It has failed completely to adapt itself to the tremendous changes in the pattern of world politics over the last few years. Whatever Governments may say, the present paralysis of NATO makes no sense at all to the peoples who must ultimately make the sacrifices required to give it meaning. Indeed the Governments themselves are behaving as if they did not believe the ritual incantations they recite at the meetings of the NATO Council — they are slashing their arms programmes and allowing themselves a licence for petty quarrels with their allies which would be inconceivable if they meant what they said about the Soviet military menace and the need for allied solidarity.

### **The Purpose of NATO**

I have always supported NATO, and I still do. But I believe it should be the framework in which the allies seek to reconcile their divergent interests and in which they adjust their policies collectively to a changing world situation. Instead of this it has become the symbol of a vanished stage in the Cold War, increasingly remote both from the facts of international life and from the aspirations of the peoples it is supposed to represent.

NATO will only survive if its members adjust themselves to the tremendous changes in the world since it was created — and for which, after all, it is partly responsible. Disarmament and disengagement should be seen, not as an alternative to NATO, as incompatible with its existence, but as an alternative policy for NATO, as the necessary condition for its survival as the core of Western solidarity. I have already tried to show that even the military problems now facing NATO are far easier to solve in the context of disengagement than in the present context of a divided Germany at the heart of a divided Europe.

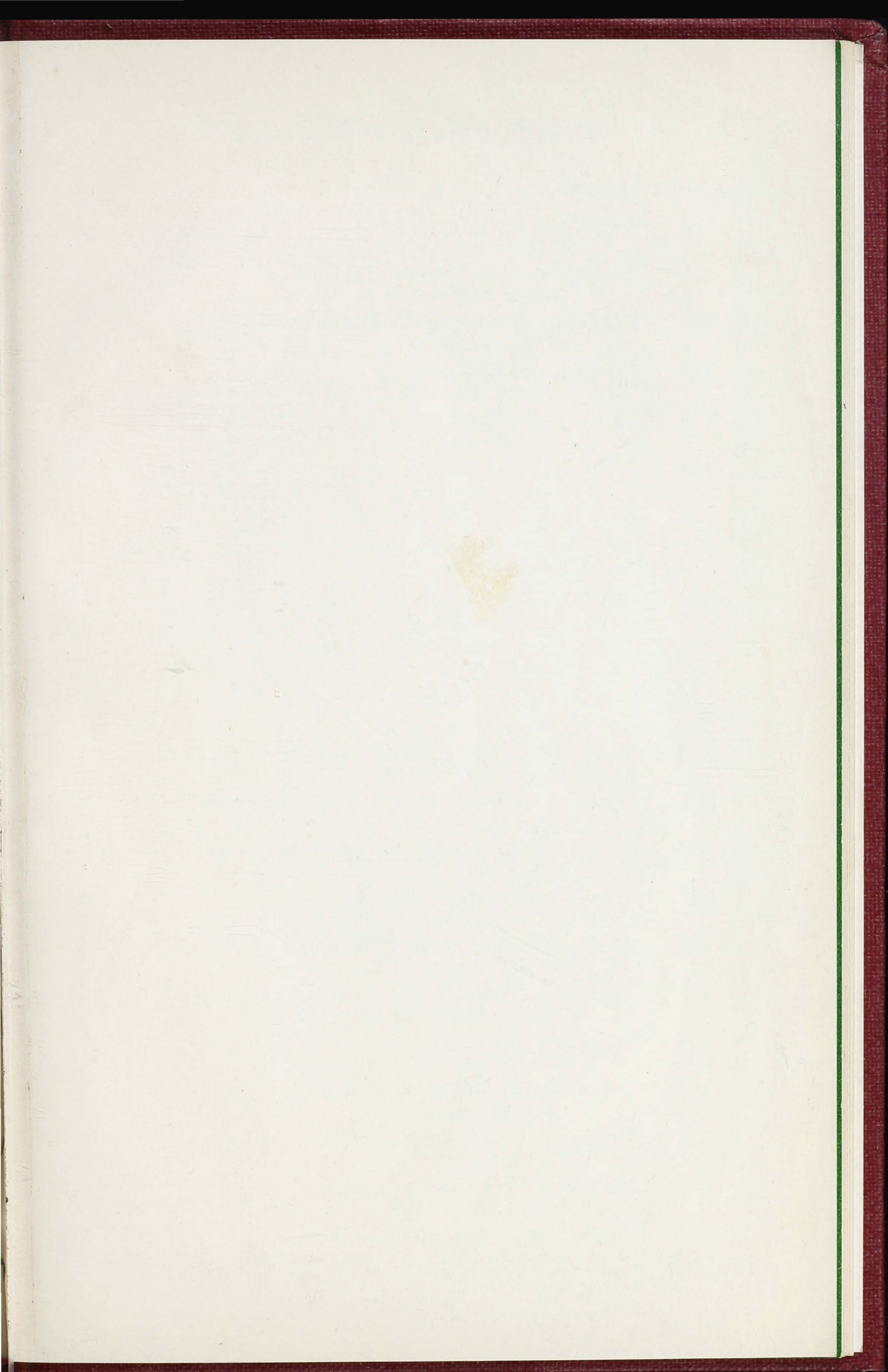
On the other hand, I would not deny that if a policy of disengagement in Central Europe could be carried out and seen to work, it would be the start of a much broader process which would transform the whole nature of post war politics. It would in fact create a precedent for similar solutions elsewhere, and for a return to the hopes of 1945, when world peace and order were rightly seen to depend on the establishment of minimum working agreements between all the great powers, including the Soviet Union.

### **Elimination of War**

You may feel that this is starry-eyed. But I am convinced that long-range nuclear weapons are an invention which cannot be compared with earlier military innovations like gunpowder or the crossbow. They represent a change in the conditions of man's existence as fundamental as the discovery

of fire. If we fail to adjust our institutions and our way of life to their implications in the next generation, I fear humanity is unlikely to survive on this planet. But if we can succeed, I think we can finally eliminate war as an instrument of policy. The absolute weapon has made war absolutely irrational and may thus prove to have eliminated the element of military power from international politics. If a violent change in the *status quo* is ruled out, some way must be found of organising peaceful changes in a situation which is felt to be intolerable. This will involve drastic and painful dislocations for both sides, but the logic of events demand it.

I believe that the establishment of a neutral belt in Europe would be the most valuable pilot scheme for the development of a new international order. And at least those who oppose it have a duty to offer us an alternative which gives equal hope of meeting the challenge of our time.



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