

6. Directive to the NATO Military Authorities from the North Atlantic Council

13 DECEMBER 1956

(...)

PART I. ANALYSIS OF SOVIET INTENTIONS

General trends of Soviet policy

The Soviet leaders see international affairs in terms of a struggle for world domination between two rival ideologies. This concept also coincides with many aspects of traditional Russian power policy. They continue their unremitting efforts to weaken and ultimately to destroy the “capitalist world”, which they look upon as their opponent in this struggle for power. This assessment has been confirmed by the events which have taken place in Hungary and the Middle East.

2. Whatever repercussions these events may have within the USSR, there is no reason to doubt that the regime will remain sufficiently stable to go on developing its economic and military strength. In spite of reductions in manpower, the military strength of the USSR will not be diminished. On the contrary, it is steadily increasing in terms of modern weapons for air, land and sea forces. Overall nuclear capability continues steadily to grow, including a capability for the delivery of nuclear weapons both within Europe and directly against North America. In addition to expanding their nuclear capability, the Soviets appear to be keeping forces able to undertake non-nuclear warfare on either a large or a small scale. The effects of the upheaval in the satellites on the military strength of the Soviet Bloc are not wholly clear, but some of the European satellite forces might not be reliable, depending on the circumstances in which aggression occurred.

Changes in the direction of decentralisation and limited “democratisation” in the Soviet Union have taken place; these changes have not been so extensive or of such a character as to constitute a basic change in the Soviet regime.

These developments have also affected Soviet-satellite relations. The recognition of “different roads to socialism” and the shock of destalinisation have imposed very great strains on the structure of the Bloc, and have confronted the USSR with serious policy dilemmas. It is not clear at present whether the USSR, having apparently miscalculated the scope and strength of nationalism and anti-Communism in Eastern Europe, will continue its earlier policy of modifying Stalinist types of economic, political and military controls in the satellites. It is clear, however, that there are limits beyond which the

Soviet Government will not permit the satellites to go and they are prepared to take not only economic and political, but also the most ruthless military measures to retain their control over the Bloc. 3. The rapid growth of the Soviet Union's economic strength gives added hope to the Soviet leaders that their aims can be achieved without resorting to a war in the foreseeable future. To accomplish an expansion of its influence the USSR has attempted to portray itself as a force for peace, has tried to lessen the suspicion of Soviet intentions in non-Communist areas, and has made increasing use of traditional diplomacy, economic ties, and cultural relations. While the Soviets are likely to continue these policies they may now find increasing difficulties in doing so, at any rate in the West. The USSR's continuing and main objective in the NATO area is to undermine support for Western defence arrangements and thus lead the way to the dissolution of NATO. At the same time, the Soviet Government are actively exploiting new possibilities for trouble-making which have arisen in the Middle East, Asia and Africa. By capitalising on the forces of nationalism and neutralism, the Soviet Government seek to increase their position of power vis-a-vis the West and to undermine and outflank the world-wide positions of the Western Powers. In this process two important weapons are the Soviet Union's growing ability to make attractive economic offers on a highly selective basis and its readiness to supply conventional arms from its large disposable stocks. They will be able to do both with increasing facility as they continue to maintain a rate of industrial growth designed to outstrip the west in economic as well as military power.

Possibilities of Soviet launching of general nuclear war

4. There is no doubt that the Soviet leaders understand and fear the consequences of general nuclear war. It can be assumed therefore that they will not deliberately launch a general war so long as they know that the West is prepared to retaliate with nuclear weapons in sufficient strength to devastate the USSR.

Circumstances may develop, however, in which the Soviet leaders may harden their attitude and be prepared to take greater risks than theretofore. They have indulged in the use of threats, including the threat of war and even of nuclear attack, as blackmail to attain their ends.

There is, furthermore, a danger of general war arising from miscalculation on their part. This danger could arise, for example, through an underestimation of the Western reaction to an aggressive action by the Soviets or through a misconstruction of Western intentions which might lead them to conclude that the Soviet Union was about to be attacked with nuclear weapons.

Possibilities of Soviet action through use of conventional arms, entailing risk of general nuclear war

5. The Soviet leaders are fully aware that any attack they might launch against NATO, even with conventional arms, would entail an immediate military response by the NATO Alliance and thus risk a general war. They would almost certainly regard open attacks with conventional arms across recognised state frontiers outside the NATO area by Soviet, Communist Chinese or satellite forces as involving, under present conditions, a serious risk of general war and therefore as something to be avoided. The Soviets are thus not likely to launch such attacks, provided that the West maintains its defence commitments, such as the stationing of overseas troops in Western Europe, its firm purpose to defend itself, appropriate nuclear retaliatory strength and adequate conventional forces to ensure that local armed intervention by Soviet or satellite forces does not offer a prospect of easy success.

6. However, the following possibilities of action by the Soviet leaders through the use of conventional arms, but which would, in varying degree, entail the risk of deteriorating into a major war, must be included among those requiring consideration:

- (a) General attacks against NATO. The USSR might launch general attacks with conventional weapons against NATO if the Soviet leaders estimated that the Alliance would be deterred from employing nuclear weapons against the USSR except in retaliation to a Soviet nuclear attack. The Soviet leaders might believe that NATO would be thus deterred, for example:
 - because of assumed Western reluctance to be the first to use nuclear weapons.
 - because of assumed fear on the part of the West that it was more vulnerable than the Soviet Union to nuclear attack.
 - because of assumed Western division or demoralisation.
- (b) Local attacks against NATO. If the Soviets believe that NATO would be deterred from employing nuclear weapons (except in retaliation to a Soviet nuclear attack) and were not able to defend itself against all types of limited aggression, including local attack (e.g. by a satellite), the Soviets might initiate, instigate, support or condone such aggression.
- (c) Attacks against peripheral non-NATO countries. If the West is deemed to be deterred from employing nuclear weapons and if for this or other reasons the Soviet leaders thought that a non-NATO country on the periphery of the Soviet Bloc would not or could not receive effective support of the Western powers, the Soviets might be tempted to use their preponderance in conventional forces either for armed intervention in the country in question or to exert

pressure on it in order to influence it towards alignment with the Soviet camp.

- (d) Insurrection and guerrilla. Armed insurrection or guerrilla activity under direct or indirect Communist sponsorship supported by irregulars or “volunteers” from the bloc might occur if the Communists are presented with opportunities (e.g. serious internal disorders in a non-Communist country, disunity in the free world or collapse of its defence arrangements, etc.)
- (e) Indirect intervention outside of NATO area. Situations in which the relations between countries outside the Soviet bloc deteriorate will be exploited by the USSR to further her political, economic and military influence. If the deterioration of such relations reaches the point of armed conflict, the USSR may go to the length of sending various forms of military assistance, including “volunteers”, from the bloc.
- (f) Soviet intervention in satellites. Extensive military measures by the USSR to cope with serious deterioration of its control over the satellites can produce an explosive situation.

PART II - THE DIRECTIVE

The North Atlantic Treaty states that the basic aim of the Alliance is to safeguard the freedom, common heritage, and civilisation of the peoples of the NATO countries. To this end, a collective defence system has been built up for the purpose of averting war. This purpose cannot be fulfilled unless the potential aggressor is confronted by NATO with forces which are so organized, disposed, trained and equipped that he will conclude that the chances of a favourable decision are too small to be acceptable and that fatal risks would be involved if he launched or supported an armed attack, even with superior numbers and the advantage of surprise.

2. In the light of the conclusions contained in Part I of this paper, a review of NATO defence planning is required in order to determine how, within the resources likely to be available, the defence effort of the Alliance and of each individual member can best achieve the most effective pattern of forces.

3. For NATO defence and as a major deterrent to Soviet aggression a fully effective nuclear retaliatory force provided with all the necessary facilities must be maintained and protected.

4. Taking into account the rôle of the nuclear retaliatory force, the land, sea and air forces available to NATO must be designed to enable them to defend NATO territory and in particular to enable them to meet all the following requirements:

- (a) to keep confidence in the military effectiveness of the NATO defence organization, and thereby to contribute to the deterrent to aggression, and to prevent external intimidation;

- (b) to deal with incidents such as infiltrations, incursions or hostile local actions by the Soviets, or by Satellites with or without overt or covert Soviet support;
- (c) to identify Soviet or Satellite aggression (on land, sea or air);
- (d) to deal with armed aggression, other than that referred to in (b) above, in accordance with the concept of "forward strategy", counting on the use of nuclear weapons at the outset, and to sustain operations, without any intention to make a major withdrawal, until the strategic counter-offensive has achieved its objective;
- (e) to protect and maintain sea communications as required in support of the above missions.

For the purposes of this directive it should be assumed that British, Canadian and U.S. forces will continue to be stationed in Allied Command Europe.

5. The shield forces must include the capability to respond quickly, should the situation so require, with nuclear weapons to any type of aggression. They must, of course, also have the capability to deal with the situations envisaged in 4(b) above without necessarily having recourse to nuclear weapons.

6. The responsibility of governments to make decisions for putting NATO military plans into action in the event of hostilities is not affected by this directive.

7. Although NATO defence planning is limited to the defence of the Treaty area, it is necessary to take account of dangers which may arise for NATO because of developments outside that area(1). In planning for the most efficient organization and equipment of NATO forces, account must be taken of the possible need for certain NATO countries to use some of their NATO forces to meet defence commitments elsewhere, such as many arise because of the various and changing forms of the Soviet inspired Communist threat on a world front. This need, however, should, in conformity with their NATO commitments, be harmonised with the primary importance of protecting the NATO area.

8. It is possible that an attack on NATO would be preceded by a period of acute political tension and heralded by advance indications involving the application of the "alert" system. In any case the consequences of an attack on NATO without warning are such that those NATO forces and facilities directly relating to early warning and the nuclear retaliatory action must be kept in constant readiness at all times; all other forces must be maintained at the appropriate NATO standard of readiness.

9. In deciding on the allocation of total resources, governments will take account, inter alia, of the rising cost of new weapons and of the need for economic resources to deal with the Soviet threat in all its aspects, without endangering their economic stability, which in itself is an essential element of their security. The question of allocation of resources will be kept under constant review, but meanwhile it should be assumed for planning purposes that in present circumstances, few, if any, NATO countries can be expected to make a substantial increase in the proportion of their resources devoted to defence. The continuing need, however, for men, money and material for NATO defence remains real.

Note:

NATO military authorities have no responsibility or authority except with respect to incidents which are covered by Articles 5 and 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty.
