

ASSEMBLY OF WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION

THIRTY-FIFTH ORDINARY SESSION

(First Part)

Current aspects of arms control: the Western European position -
reply to the annual report of the Council

REPORT

submitted on behalf of the
Committee on Defence Questions and Armaments
by Mr. de Beer, Rapporteur

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Mandate for negotiation on conventional armed forces in Europe

1. Adopted in committee by 13 votes to 0 with 2 abstentions.

2. *Members of the committee:* Mr. Kuttelmann (Chairman); MM. Fourné (Alternate: *Baumel*), *de Beer* (Vice-Chairmen); Mr. Alloncle, Mrs. Baarveld-Schlaman, MM. Cariglia (Alternate: *Mezzapesa*), *Cox*, De Decker, Derycke (Alternate: *Kempinaire*), *Ewing*, *Fiandrotti*, *Fillon*, *Fioret* (Alternate: *Fassino*), *Irmer*, *Jung*, *Konen*, *de Kwaadsteniet*, Mrs. Lalumière, MM. *Pecchioli*, *Scheer* (Alternate: *Antretter*), *Sinesio*, *Sir Dudley Smuth*, MM. *Speed*, *Steiner* (Alternate: *Klejdzinski*), *Steverlynck* (Alternate: *Uyttendaele*), *Sir John Stokes*, Mr. *Zierer*.

N.B. *The names of those taking part in the vote are printed in italics.*

Rapporteur's Preface

In preparation for this report, *the Rapporteur* had interviews with the following *permanent representatives to conventional arms control talks and their staff in Vienna on 21st and 22nd February 1989*:

H.E. Mr. L.W. Veenendaal, Ambassador, Head of the Netherlands Delegation;

Brigadier-General C. Kuypers, Defence Adviser, Netherlands Delegation;

H.E. Mr. G. Joetze, Ambassador, Head of the Federal German Delegation;

Mr. J. Pohlmann, Deputy Head of the Federal German Delegation;

Mr. E. Duchene, Deputy Head of the Belgian Delegation;

Mr. John D. Bryson, Deputy Head of the Canadian Delegation;

H.E. Mr. T. Strulak, Ambassador, Head of the Polish Delegation;

Mr. L. Breckon, Deputy Head of the United States Delegation;

Mr. D.J. Bowen, Deputy Head of the United Kingdom Delegation;

Mr. B.E. Cleghorn, Deputy Head of the United Kingdom Delegation;

H.E. Mr. Gleissner, Ambassador, Head of Arms Control Department, Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs;

Mr. I. Broz, Deputy Head of the Czechoslovakian Delegation.

He was also briefed in the *International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London, on 3rd April 1989*, by:

Colonel John Cross, Deputy Director;

Colonel Andrew Duncan, Assistant Director for Information.

The *committee as a whole* was addressed by The Hon. Archie Hamilton, MP, United Kingdom Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Ministry of Defence, in London, on 3rd November 1988, and by Mr. Jean-Pierre Chevènement, French Minister of Defence, in Paris, on 6th February 1989; and by Sir Geoffrey Howe, United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and The Rt. Hon. George Younger, United Kingdom Secretary of State for Defence, in London, on 4th April 1989.

The committee and the Rapporteur wish to express their special thanks to all the ministers, officials and senior officers who briefed the Rapporteur or the committee and replied to questions.

Draft Recommendation*on current aspects of arms control: the Western European position*

The Assembly,

- (i) Welcoming the successful outcome of the third review conference in Vienna in January 1989, and more specifically the signing of the mandate for negotiations on conventional armed forces in Europe and the promising start to these negotiations;
- (ii) Stressing that the mistakes which hampered the MBFR negotiations should not be repeated, especially the disagreements over actual numbers and the quality of weapons systems and military personnel and differences regarding an effective and strict verification régime;
- (iii) Certain that it is in the interests of all twenty-three participants in the CFE talks that the negotiations should be fruitful and harmonious, avoiding any unnecessary obstructive action;
- (iv) Considering that political reality calls for equal ceilings of armaments and troops, visibly lower than the present NATO levels;
- (v) Convinced that the absence of offensive equipment near the contact line would strengthen mutual confidence;
- (vi) Recognising that SNF weapons are part of a credible deterrent – even with a balance of conventional armaments – and that a mix of nuclear and conventional weapons remains a necessity in the foreseeable future;
- (vii) Noting, however, that time is required for further technical and tactical research on a replacement for the Lance missile and that a final decision about production does not require to be taken at present in consideration of the CFE talks;
- (viii) Underlining the useful contribution to mutual confidence-building which would result from the publication of detailed and clear defence budgets,

RECOMMENDS THAT THE COUNCIL

1. Strive for simple definitions of equal ceilings in which qualitative complications should be avoided insofar as possible, and take the view that disagreements about the actual numbers of forces is a matter of secondary importance;
2. Advocate that, for the sake of effective and strict verification, the exchanges of information mentioned in the mandate should refer not only to levels of armaments and military personnel but also exact locations;
3. Take the necessary steps to ensure that practical research is carried out by WEU on the vital subject of verification and report fully to the Assembly;
4. Consider the possibility of including in the CFE talks all conventional weapons systems which are not explicitly excluded in the mandate, if this is essential for both parties for the smooth progress of the negotiations;
5. Aim to achieve equal ceilings by asymmetrical reductions, lower than the present NATO levels, a 10% reduction in tanks, armoured infantry fighting vehicles and artillery being a provisional goal;
6. Participate in all the preparations necessary for replacing the Lance missile, but decide on production/deployment at a later time;
7. Promote the publication of complete, detailed and clear defence budgets by all participants in the CSCE talks;
8. Urge the Chairman-in-Office to establish at the highest level in his country's delegation in Vienna, a WEU liaison officer for the CFE talks.

Explanatory Memorandum

(submitted by Mr. de Beer, Rapporteur)

I. Introduction

1.1. Writing a report on "Current aspects of arms control" at the moment is a fascinating but risky matter: fascinating, because we are experiencing an improvement in East-West relations which until recently very few would have judged possible; risky, because events present themselves at such a high speed that what is written today might land in the wastepaper basket tomorrow and maybe this is why the annual report of the Council allows little opportunity for any comment on its work in the arms control domain! Your Rapporteur feels that the best course is therefore to begin with a consideration of the background setting.

1.2. It would be a mistake to assume that "glasnost" and "perestroika" are the products of new idealism in the Kremlin. They are nothing more than a necessity for Russian society, for the following reasons:

- (i) the centralistic socialist economy is failing. The quality of life lags further and further behind that of the West. This is not only true for material aspects, but for less usual ones, like the environment, as well;
- (ii) we are on the verge of a new worldwide industrial revolution. The keywords are: "information technology". The most advanced countries will experience the greatest growth of prosperity. Information technology, however, can only thrive in an open society where information is freely available. The base necessary is a society which is used to handling freedom of expression and differences of opinion;
- (iii) the Eastern European countries spend a much larger part of their national incomes on defence than do the countries of WEU, which weighs heavily on their relatively poor standard of living and increases the discontent of the population.

1.3. Apparently Mr. Gorbachev is convinced that glasnost, perestroika and cutting the defence budget are necessary to keep pace with the West. His new course certainly opens prospects for his own country, but for us as well. His success, however, is far from secure. He still has to go a very long way and he must take account of the resistance of the conservative faction in the Kremlin and of the party officials in the country

who do not want to give up their privileged positions so easily. For him, two issues are of crucial interest. In the first place the living standards of the Soviet Union have to rise. "What benefits do we have from glasnost and perestroika", many Russians ask themselves, "if we still have to queue for lots of daily needs?". Secondly, his foreign affairs policy should be successful in the opinion of the other Soviet party leaders. There is a fair chance that the hard line in the Kremlin will prevail again, should he fail.

1.4. Where information technology is concerned, what is true for the civilian sector also applies to the military and the Soviets must be aware that they are increasingly likely to trail the West, which would diminish any chance of rebuilding their economy even further.

1.5. The question arises, under current circumstances what would be the most sensible attitude for the West? It is quite clear that the Eastern European countries need a considerable reduction in their defence budgets – more than we do. The intended unilateral reduction of the conventional forces of the Warsaw Pact countries is a clear indication. The West could quietly wait and see how things are developing in the East, scarcely making any concessions, expecting that the advantages will automatically fall into our lap.

1.6. It is your Rapporteur's opinion that this would not be a very wise move. By doing this we would give away the initiative. Furthermore, we too have a lot to gain. The offensive capacity of the Warsaw Pact forces is still a serious threat to us. Worse, this threat increases with the implementation of the INF treaty. The elimination of medium-range nuclear weapons makes the Warsaw Pact's preponderance of tanks, armoured vehicles and artillery in the European theatre even more significant. An asymmetrical reduction of conventional armaments is now more vital than ever for our security. On top of this, "burden-sharing", more and more emphasised by the USA, faces the WEU countries with higher expenditure for defence in the near future. A lightening of our defence task would therefore be welcome.

1.7. The conclusion is that, whereas the Warsaw Pact countries need a reduction of armed forces very badly, we too have a special interest in the successful outcome of the CFE talks. We should not let a favourable moment pass by. We must negotiate toughly at the CSCE

and CFE talks, but at the same time we cannot avoid taking Mr. Gorbachev's position into consideration. If we do not, we may spoil our own chances.

II. A brief retrospect

2.1. A chronological review of arms control negotiations over the last fifteen years makes interesting reading¹:

- 1973 (July)
Start of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) in Helsinki.
- 1973 (October)
Start of the negotiations on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) in Vienna. In the course of the seventies, parties agree on the final aim: reduction of military personnel to a ceiling of 900 000 men (of whom 700 000 army personnel); the USA and USSR taking the lead. Disagreements about the correct numbers of present forces and the issue of national versus collective ceilings prevent an agreement.
- 1975 (August)
Signing of the Helsinki Final Act. In the so-called first basket (military security), the countries promise to take various confidence-building measures such as the announcement of manoeuvres and the exchange of observers.
- 1976 (December)
In Vienna, the West proposes deleting Russian tanks against American nuclear weapons. This so-called third option is the only occasion when NATO took up the wish from the eastern side to negotiate not only manpower but armaments as well. In 1979, when the USA decides on the unilateral withdrawal of 1 000 nuclear warheads from Europe as part of the dual-track decision, this third option vanishes.
- 1977-1978
First follow-up conference to the Helsinki Final Act in Belgrade.
- 1980-1983
Second follow-up conference to the Helsinki Final Act in Madrid.
- 1983
In Montebello, NATO decides to reduce and replace shorter intermediate-range (SRINF) and short-range (SNF) nuclear forces.

1. Source: "The C(A)FE negotiations in Vienna", Netherlands Institute for International Relations, "Clingendael", March 1989. Authors: J.G. Siccama and C. Homan.

- 1984
Start of the Conference on Disarmament in Europe in Stockholm as a sequel to the Madrid decisions.
- 1986 (May)
The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the NATO member countries at their meeting in Halifax establish a "high-level task force", which should take "bold new steps" concerning conventional arms reductions.
- 1986 (June)
In the Budapest appeal, the Warsaw Treaty proposes the mutual reduction of armed forces by 100 000 to 150 000 men in the next two years. Reductions of 25% should follow, which, according to the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, would amount to the same as reductions of half a million men on both sides.
- 1986 (September)
At the Conference on Disarmament in Europe in Stockholm, an agreement is obtained on "confidence- and security-building measures" - amongst others the announcement of troop movements greater than 13 000 men. The USSR accepts on-site inspections.
- 1986 (November)
Start of the third follow-up conference to the Helsinki Final Act in Vienna. One of the issues is a mandate for "conventional stability talks (CST)": changed (in 1989) into "conventional armed forces in Europe" (CFE).
- 1987 (April)
During a speech in Brussels, the American Senator Sam Nunn pleads for an agreement on two points: (i) a Russian reduction in Central Europe of 13 divisions (or more) in exchange for an American reduction of 2 divisions (or more); (ii) mutual promises of no first use of nuclear weapons.
- 1987 (May)
At a conference in East Berlin, the Warsaw Treaty Organisation gives priority to the removal of the most offensive weapons from Central Europe in order to reduce the danger of a surprise attack. Nuclear weapons should be part of the negotiations. NATO and the Warsaw Pact should start talks about their military doctrines.
- 1987 (June)
The North Atlantic Council declares at its meeting in Reykjavik that reductions in Russian and American nuclear short-range armaments are only possible "in

conjunction with " a conventional balance and a worldwide ban on chemical weapons. The total approach on arms control by the alliance will be elaborated in a " comprehensive concept ".

- 1987 (November)
A RAND-study concludes that military stability in Europe will be increased only when the Warsaw Pact makes asymmetric reductions of 5 to 1 (or more).
- 1987 (November)
General Jaruzelski proposes an exchange of tanks (on the Warsaw Pact side) against aircraft (on the NATO side).
- 1987 (December)
The signing of the INF treaty between the USA and the USSR in Washington. A global prohibition on the possession of intermediate-range nuclear forces².
- 1988 (March)
The communiqué of the NATO summit in Brussels announces that NATO will, within the framework of CST, aim at:
 - the establishment of a secure and stable balance of conventional armed forces at lower ceilings;
 - doing away with the inequalities which have a negative influence on stability and security;
 - (as a matter of priority) abolishing any capability to start a surprise attack and undertake large-scale offensive action. In order to maintain the deterrent, a mix of conventional and nuclear armaments, which must be kept up to date, remains necessary.
- 1988 (7th December)
In a speech to the United Nations in New York, the Soviet leader, Mr. Gorbachev, announces that his country will withdraw 50 000 men and 5 000 tanks from Eastern Europe³. Six tank divisions, located in the GDR, Czechoslovakia and Hungary will be disbanded.
- 1988 (8th December)
The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the NATO countries propose in Brussels to reduce the total number of tanks in Europe to 40 000 (20 000 for NATO and 20 000 for the Warsaw Pact).

2. For details see report on " Disarmament - reply to the thirty-third annual report of the Council ", Document 1158, 3rd November 1988, Rapporteur: Mr. Tummers.

3. Total numbers of unilateral reductions announced are: 500 000 men and 10 000 tanks, 8 500 artillery pieces and 800 combat aircraft.

- 1989 (17th January)

The signing of the final document of the third follow-up conference of the CSCE in Vienna. It contains the mandate for the " negotiation on conventional armed forces in Europe ", which started on 9th March in Vienna.

2.2. The MBFR talks, which began in October 1973 in Vienna, were limited to conventional forces. Seven NATO and four Warsaw Pact member countries took part: Belgium, Canada, FRG, Luxembourg, Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States, Czechoslovakia, GDR, Poland and the USSR. They silted up after a promising start - mainly because of disagreements over actual numbers and the quality of weapons systems and military personnel, and differences regarding an effective and strict verification system. After fifteen years, the MBFR negotiations are now formally finished. No consensus has been achieved but it is important that we learn a lesson from the mistakes made.

III. A fresh start in Vienna

3.1. A fresh start was made with the Concluding Document of the Vienna Meeting on 17th January 1989. All twenty-three NATO and Warsaw Pact countries are taking part in the CFE (conventional forces in Europe) talks. An outline for the negotiations has been given in a special mandate, signed by all twenty-three participants. The aim is to arrive at the establishment of a stable and secure balance of conventional armed forces (which include conventional armaments and equipment), at lower levels in Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals; the elimination of disparities prejudicial to stability and security; and the elimination, as a matter of priority, of the capability for launching surprise attacks and for initiating large-scale offensive action. These objectives shall be achieved by the application of militarily significant measures such as reductions, limitations, redeployment, equal ceilings and related measures, amongst others.

3.2. In the paragraphs of the mandate outlining " objectives and methods ", reference is made in particular to " the elimination, as a matter of priority, of the capability for launching surprise attack and for initiating large-scale offensive action. " " Offensive action " for all Europeans, both in West and East is almost synonymous with the use of armoured vehicles and it is no coincidence that it is on the elimination of the present asymmetries and real reductions (on both sides) that the talks need to be focused. Which is why alliance nations particularly wish to see the categories of equipment for future cuts restricted initially to tanks, artillery and armoured fighting vehicles.

3.3. Other important aspects are:

- the subject shall be conventional armed forces, but the existence of multiple capabilities will not be a criterion for modifying the scope of the negotiations;
- nuclear weapons will not be a subject of these negotiations;
- naval forces and chemical weapons will not be discussed;
- there will be an effective and strict verification system which will include on-site inspections as a matter of right;
- information shall be exchanged about the capabilities of the forces involved;
- agreements reached shall be internationally binding.

IV. Mandate for negotiation on conventional armed forces in Europe

*(The complete text of the mandate
is reproduced at appendix)*

4.1. With regard to Western European Union, the first item which is remarkable is the inclusion, in the opening paragraphs of the mandate itself, of specific reference to the Treaty of Brussels (1948). This reference was apparently included at the direct instigation of the French authorities in an effort to play down the “ bloc to bloc ” connotations of mentioning both the Washington (1949) and Warsaw (1955) Treaties.

4.2. Of course the implications and possible advantages of this specific reference to the Brussels Treaty are potentially many, although, whether for example, France, in particular, or any other member nation would go so far as attempting to propose a WEU caucus as a “ club within a club ” (or “ bloc within a bloc ”) on the western side is debatable. The place for such discussion and formulation of a staunchly Western European attitude is obviously first and foremost in the WEU Council and its sub-groups: a move which the Assembly has advocated on a number of recent occasions⁴. The Committee on Defence Questions and Armaments was delighted to hear from the Chairman-in-Office on 4th April 1989 that just such a discussion had taken place at the full Council meeting the preceding day.

(i) Force levels

4.3. Quite apart from the preparation, therefore, of positions before the CFE talks began, and on a quasi-permanent basis once they

are in progress, the most evident competence of WEU is in relation to the reduced force levels which one hopes will result from the negotiation (the subject of a parallel report by the Committee on Defence Questions and Armaments: “ Force comparisons ”, Rapporteur: Mr. Steiner). Under the terms of Article VI of Protocol No. II to the modified Brussels Treaty, the United Kingdom undertook to “ ...maintain on the mainland of Europe, including Germany, the effective strength of the United Kingdom forces which are now assigned to the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, that is to say four divisions and the Second Tactical Air Force, or such other forces as the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, regards as having equivalent fighting capacity ”. The United Kingdom undertook “ not to withdraw these forces against the wishes of the majority of the high contracting parties... ”. In accordance with the procedure provided for in that article, the WEU Council subsequently acquiesced in the United Kingdom’s request to reduce the levels of forces it maintains on the mainland of Europe, and the level now agreed is 55 000 men plus a tactical air force.

4.4. In the report on “ Disarmament – reply to the thirty-third annual report of the Council ” prepared for the Committee on Defence Questions and Armaments in November 1988 (Rapporteur: Mr. Tummers), it was pointed out (paragraph 2.31) that “ Where levels of forces present in Germany are concerned, the committee would like to underline the importance of maintaining agreed numbers and not making unilateral reductions, unless and until agreed and verifiable multilateral arms control measures are negotiated. ”

4.5. Current British force levels in the Federal Republic of Germany may eventually have to be reduced as a result of these negotiations, but such reductions would have to involve the necessary legal steps within Western European Union before implementation. Similarly, the maximum levels of ground and air forces which member states of WEU place under NATO command are fixed in Articles I and II of Protocol No. II to the modified Brussels Treaty and these limits also would probably have to be reconsidered and reviewed.

4.6. In the context of possible revision of the Brussels Treaty as a result of the recent enlargement of WEU to include Portugal and Spain⁵, the implications of this link with the CFE/CSCE talks in Vienna are considerable and should not be neglected as the Council formulates its attitudes and proposals on both counts during the coming months.

4. “ Disarmament (the prospects for Western Europe after the Moscow summit) ”, 7th June 1988, Document 1147, Rapporteur: Mr. Kittelmann, and “ Disarmament – reply to the thirty-third annual report of the Council ”, 3rd November 1988, Document 1158, Rapporteur: Mr. Tummers.

5. See “ Future of European security – reply to the annual report of the Council ”, report tabled by Mr. van der Sanden on behalf of the General Affairs Committee.

4.7. What Mr. Gorbachev's and his colleagues' apparent readiness to make radical cuts has done is to transform the outlook for the Vienna negotiations, raising expectations of quick progress. A breakthrough in this particular domain, by blunting the most threatening aspect of Soviet military power, could simplify and probably accelerate progress in other talks ranging from chemical weapons even to nuclear arms in Europe... By eliminating Warsaw Pact superiority in tanks, artillery and armoured fighting vehicles, the risk of a surprise eastern offensive which could *seize and hold territory* in Western Europe would be considerably reduced. Throughout the talks the simple criterion in assessing whether or not a particular weapons system can or cannot "seize and hold territory" should be borne in mind when deciding an order of priorities for reductions and limitations.

4.8. It is worth noting "en passant" that realists in the arms control world are fully aware that disarmament does not necessarily always mean vast reductions in defence spending. On occasion, what is involved is a simple redistribution of arms expenditure; for example, the GDR's leader, Mr. Honecker, has already coupled reductions of his country's offensive weapons with a parallel increase in numbers of anti-tank weapons and anti-tank artillery. (GDR proposals include reductions in tanks, and cutting the army by 10 000 men and defence expenditure by 10%; it is, of course, these reductions which are given considerable publicity, rather than increases in spending in other areas.)

(ii) *Naval forces*

4.9. In spite of the careful wording of the agreed mandate, there is nonetheless a strong probability that different participants will seek to draw particular advantage from their own interpretation and, even where specific exclusions apply (such as "naval forces" or "nuclear weapons"), attempts are already being made at linkage: implying that agreement in this forum might depend on progress in other realms. Naval forces are excluded from the CFE talks for good reasons: firstly, navies operate worldwide, they are not bound to the European theatre of operations; secondly, the Atlantic Ocean for NATO is the hinterland of Europe just as Russia is for the countries of the Warsaw Pact (i.e. a line of supply for reinforcement in case of military conflict). It is reasonable therefore for NATO to have the right to a strong surface fleet to guarantee the security of its sea-lines of communication. Although it may be true that NATO has a preponderance of surface vessels, the Soviet Union has a preponderance of attack submarines.

4.10. Soviet submarines pose a specific problem also which is worth highlighting because of other implications. Many such submarines are double-hulled and built of titanium. The main way for western navies to counter the threat they pose is

to use nuclear depth charges against them as conventional torpedoes are of little effect. And these weapons are replaced or updated as necessary without seemingly arousing the same furore involved in replacing other tactical nuclear weapons... However, including such considerations, and indeed naval forces generally, in the present talks would immensely complicate them!

(iii) *Troops*

4.11. Less important than the main items of equipment covered by the mandate are the troops who man the equipment. MBFR should have taught the participants a salutary lesson: not to waste time counting heads to establish numbers which will then prove virtually impossible to verify. Discussions must concentrate on units and equipment: reductions in equipment should imply reductions in manpower as a direct result. (As a matter of interest, this same argument is currently being used in Washington to justify Republican Congressman Ireland's resolution to reduce United States troops in Europe – by withdrawing the crews and those responsible for the maintenance and guarding of the cruise missiles to be abolished as a result of the INF agreement.) Quite apart from effectively diminishing the perceived threat, troop reductions will suit most countries concerned, particularly as the "demographic trough" begins to take effect over the next ten years or so.

(iv) *"Zones"*

4.12. Although a priori WEU has, because of its membership, concentrated hitherto on the central front in Europe, that should not necessarily mean that a "zonal approach" at the CFE talks is to be preferred. The "flank countries" (Turkey especially, in the south, and Norway particularly, in the north) are already concerned that their interests may be neglected. These interests are highlighted with respect to the northern flank in another report of the Committee on Defence Questions and Armaments⁶, as they were with respect to the south in 1986⁷.

4.13. Another aspect of the problem of "zones" is the Soviet proposal to create "special corridors": strips along the border between East and West where military activities and arms, including nuclear weapons, would be severely limited. Such an idea perpetuates the "nuclear-free zone" theme which the Soviets have frequently advanced in the past. The main effect of such an idea would be to limit western room for manoeuvre (literally so) in the Federal

6. "State of European security – intervention forces and reinforcement for the centre and the north", Rapporteur: Mr. Speed.

7. European security and the Mediterranean", 14th October 1986, Document 1073, Rapporteur: Mr. Kittelmann.