

of themselves than they could a year ago. But they are not yet strong enough to give assurance that the initial assault could be successfully resisted, NATO members — especially the European members — have the right to that assurance, all the more because in the military and strategic and technical circumstances of today the land defence against and the air counter-attack to the initial assault may be decisive. Forces in being and the power immediately in reserve may decide the issue.

The minimum defence required to meet such an initial shock was agreed on at Lisbon, though there can never be fixed and final decisions in these matters. The Lisbon programme was not one that could, I think, fairly be attacked as militaristic, or unrealistic, having regard to the danger which made defence necessary. Furthermore, it was a firm programme for 1952 only, the figures for 1953 and 1954 were for planning purposes only, subject to revision later in the light of political and economic considerations.

Fulfilment of this 1952 Lisbon programme has not been easy. Some unforeseen shortages in equipment have developed. Some members have encountered more serious economic and financial difficulties than expected. But every member is making an honest effort to meet its objective by the end of the year and I think that substantial success will have been achieved by that time. An English weekly of very high repute, the *Economist*, which has never uncritically accepted the Lisbon decisions, had this to say the other day about the progress in implementing those decisions:

The suggestion which is now being heard that the Lisbon plans are millstones around the necks of the Atlantic allies is inaccurate and unfair; there is full provision in them for revision and second thoughts, and no justification for unilateral action by member governments.

Even more important is the fact that the short-term plans which were agreed at Lisbon have turned out to be remarkably accurate. By the end of this year, General Ridgway will have a number of divisions not far short of the fifty he was promised; if there is a deficiency of a few divisions it will be in reserves rather than in front-line formations. How well trained the latter are will be shown in the manoeuvres about to begin in Germany. In aircraft the total number of machines available will be only a few hundred short of the 4,000 planned. The work on bases, communication lines and headquarter systems has made remarkable progress. There are not enough men and weapons on the spot to make Western Europe impregnable — but no one ever thought there would or will be. The military purpose is to confront any Russian threat in Central Europe with powerful delaying action; the political purpose is to remove from the minds of western statesmen the fear that they can nowhere in the world act firmly and boldly for fear of exposing Western Europe to a threat that could not be resisted. Both those purposes must remain unchanged so long as the present diplomatic deadlock continues, and nothing has occurred this year in Europe to suggest that anything more than a slight easing of tension is likely.

This is, I think, a good short statement of NATO'S plans, purposes and achievements, though it may be somewhat optimistic on the realization of the 1952 force totals.

As to the future, we must as a first necessity bring to 100 per cent completion the Lisbon 1952 programme as quickly as possible. That is the minimum requirement. Beyond that, the NATO agencies are already examining the position with a view to making proposals — and there could be no more difficult task than this — which will reconcile risks, requirements and resources. When this review is completed — late this year — decisions — vitally important decisions — will again have to be taken by governments through their ministerial representatives on the NATO Council.

Those decisions will have to balance military, economic and political factors. This is about the most difficult balancing act in history and I have no illusions that the result will satisfy everyone. There will be those who will say that we are taking