

The first French aide-mémoire also sets out briefly the reasons which, in the view of President de Gaulle, justify the position which he takes. The following arguments are listed:

First, he argues that the threat to Western Europe has changed and no longer has the immediate and menacing character it once had; he says that the countries of Europe have restored their economies and recovered their earlier strength; he argues that France is developing an atomic armament which is not susceptible of being integrated within the NATO forces; that the nuclear stalemate has transformed the conditions of Western defence; and that Europe is no longer the centre of international crises.

These are observations with which I imagine we are all more or less in agreement. But do they, singly or jointly, justify the conclusion drawn by the French Government that integrated defence arrangements are no longer required for the defence of Western Europe?

Let me examine each of the French arguments in turn:

First, the threat to Western Europe. Over the years the Soviet Union has steadily strengthened its military forces in Eastern Germany and in the European area in general. These forces are now stronger than at any time since the end of the Second World War. While I recognize that the likelihood of an actual attack has diminished, the effectiveness of NATO's defence arrangements has been, and remains, a factor in this favourable turn of events. Moreover, it is considered prudent to base defence policy on the known capabilities of a possible enemy rather than on his declared intentions, or even his supposed intentions as we may rightly or wrongly assess them. To avoid any possible misinterpretation, I also want to make clear my conviction that NATO countries should avoid provocation of the Soviet Union. On the contrary, Canada strongly favours the promotion of better understanding between the Soviet Union and the Western countries. But, as the Cuban experience of 1962 demonstrated, progress towards better relations may be greater when it is clear that there is no alternative to accommodation.

Secondly, Europe's recovery. It is, of course, true that the European countries have greatly strengthened their positions in every way. We applaud this development. We know that the generosity of the United States, through the Marshall Plan, greatly contributed to this happy consequence. We have, in fact, been assuming that this would in time enable the Western European states to take on increasing responsibility for European defence, possibly within the framework of new co-operative arrangements among the European members of the alliance. The French action may have set back this prospect, as it has the immediate effect of dividing the countries of Europe over what their defence policies should be.

Thirdly, it is a fact that France has developed an independent nuclear force. But, as we see it, this is not an argument against the integration of other forces. The United Kingdom has demonstrated that the acquisition of a strategic nuclear force does not require the withdrawal of other national forces from the unified command and planning arrangements.