

Yet it is undeniable that the world situation has changed radically since the North Atlantic Treaty was negotiated. A global nuclear war would not be so destructive that no man in his senses could regard it as a continuation of policy. Indeed, it would be a final apocalypse rather than another chapter in a continuing story. I have described the world as now having entered an era of virtual nuclear stalemate. When both sides have the power of inflicting appalling damage on the other, it is perhaps improbable that either of the great antagonists will be willing to run the risk of precipitating a general war. But the present equation of mutual terror is highly precarious. A miscalculation could upset it. A local war could spread to engulf it. In such circumstances, it seems to me that the diplomacy of the West must now be looking far beyond the urgent objectives of the past decade, beyond the provision of defensive strength and unity, for some positive policy which will supplement all that we have understood by "containment", for some accommodation with the Soviet Union which will introduce a measure of stability into a highly precarious international situation. The defensive strength that we have now amassed suggests to my mind that we can safely embark on such a search, so long as we keep our wits about us and continue to test every proposal against the touchstone of our vital security interests. And the assessment that I have made of Soviet intentions suggests that such an effort would not be fore-doomed to failure, since, while there can be no doubt of the rooted animosity of the Soviets towards us, the evidence would seem to indicate that they are not so deluded by Marxist doctrine as to be incapable of adjusting to the realities of the nuclear age.

Such an accommodation with the Soviet Union would necessarily include some degree of disarmament. Here I am glad to be able to report that some modest progress is already being made. In the summer of 1957 we joined with our principal allies in submitting a linked set of disarmament proposals to the Soviet Union. We still believe that those proposals are fair and reasonable, and would constitute a sound basis for disarmament negotiations. But we were never so wedded to them as to rule out consideration of alternative approaches. We made it clear that if some modification of them seemed likely to open up a more helpful avenue of negotiation, without imperilling our own security, we would certainly be prepared to adopt a different procedure. If, in particular, it seemed that progress might be made more readily by unwrapping the package proposal which we had joined in presenting a little more than a year ago, and by attempting to reach agreement separately on some of its components, we would be prepared to consider whether that course could not be safely followed.

In fact, it has been along such lines that progress has been made in disarmament discussions during the past few months. Earlier this fall agreement was reached at a meeting