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MEMORANDUM

To: The Political Committee

From: The Chairman

SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN PRESS REACTION TO THE NATO
DECEMBER 1969 MINISTERIAL MEETING

I am circulating herewith the promised Secretariat report on this subject.

(Signed) Jörg KASTL

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Report by the Political Division

SUMMARY

Commentary on the December Ministerial Meeting of NATO by Communist country media in general avoided polemics. However, it generally evaluated negatively NATO's response to the Warsaw Pact appeal for a European security conference, asserting that the appeal had found a positive reception even among NATO member states and that this, together with pressure of European public opinion favouring the appeal, prevented NATO from totally rejecting the holding of a conference. Perhaps in an attempt to divide NATO members, the United States and, to a lesser degree, the United Kingdom were singled out as adamant opponents of the conference idea. Whereas Belgium, France, Italy and Germany were said to be more favourably inclined. The Bulgarian commentaries were notable for their distorted reporting, while the Rumanian and Yugoslav, as might be expected, focused on the evils of the continued existence of power blocs.

In broader observations of non-NATO contexts, when discussing the 3rd-4th December Moscow Summit meeting and the initiation of German-Soviet talks, the Federal Republic received praise from Bulgarian, Polish and especially Rumanian media. Because of the almost parallel sitting of the Moscow Summit, comment on the NATO meeting was closely tied to comment on the Communist session, with NATO taking second place and suffering a more odious comparison than might have been the case had the Moscow Summit not occurred when it did.

Soviet Union

On 6 December, the Soviet news agency TASS reported that, in the political discussion at the NATO Council session, the bulk of the time was taken up by the question of the attitude of the "Atlantic bloc" to the proposal of the socialist countries on the holding of an all-European conference on security and cooperation in Europe. TASS conceded that the NATO Declaration does not reject in principle the idea of holding a conference on European security, but complained that the Declaration makes the convening of such a conference dependent upon progress in the bilateral and multilateral discussions and negotiations which have already begun, or could begin shortly, and which relate to fundamental

problems of European security. Most Soviet commentaries avoided commenting directly on the substance of the NATO documents by instead referring obliquely to the "European problems" which are not ripe for solution and which, if placed on the agenda of a European security conference, would doom it to failure in advance.

Writing in Pravda on 8 December, N. Bragin and Yu. Kharlanov drew a lurid picture of the "complex struggle" which they claim took place during the closed sessions of the NATO Council, and which proved, allegedly, that "the supporters of the 'hard line' had not succeeded in preventing the spokesmen of the countries which had taken a more realistic stand from voicing their views on the most urgent issues of the present situation in Europe".

A Matveyev article in IZVESTIYA on 11 December attributed the unsatisfactory outcome of the Brussels meeting to "American-British diplomacy". British Defence Minister Healey was attacked for suggesting a "European nucleus" in NATO, while U.S. representatives, it was said, "are trying to force the West European countries to assume a new burden of military programmes". According to an article in RED STAR on 12 December, "this year alone the NATO countries' expenditure on aggressive preparations increased by some 800 million dollars, and many of this bloc's member states intend to increase their military budgets next year by another 5 to 8 percent".

The same RED STAR article also criticised the decisions on nuclear guidelines, claiming that: "A particular danger is posed by the decisions adopted at Brussels regarding nuclear weapons. Their essence amounts to a reduction of the so-called 'nuclear threshold'. In other words, the Atlantic strategists intend to use nuclear weapons at the very initial stage of the military conflict they plan primarily against the East European socialist countries but also in the basin of the Baltic Sea".

Bulgaria

Kooperativno Selo on 4 December concentrated on defense aspects. It noted the Canadian decision to withdraw "4,800 of its 10,000 men in Germany"; the reorganization of NATO troops; shifting the defense line farther East toward the borders of the socialist countries; a strengthened NATO position in the Mediterranean and the inclusion of Norway in the Nuclear Planning Group.

Radio Sofia's Brussels correspondent reported on 5 December that Secretary Rogers' statement, noting that proof of good will is first required before the Warsaw Pact proposals can be met, means that the convocation of a security conference will be protracted "and, if possible, thwarted." He stated that Minister Schumann said France "was openly in favour of the convocation of an all-European conference without preliminary conditions which might impede its realisation and success", while "Foreign Minister Scheel spoke with great sincerity in favour of the convocation of such a conference." The report concluded by noting "disagreement between France and the United States which emphasised the military and political disunity in NATO."

Another radio commentator, reporting in laudatory terms on the Moscow Summit, contrasted what she described as the sincere efforts of the socialist states to resolve the problems of Europe with NATO's opposition to the convocation of a conference, which attitude, she said, does not contribute to finding a constructive solution to those problems.

The party daily, Rabotnichesko Delo, on 5 December lamented that the Western allies, in response to the Warsaw Pact's "concrete proposals" merely "talked and talked and talked" because "they do not have the sincere wish to hold serious talks on pressing issues," fearing that holding such talks would redound to the credit of the socialist states and that agreement at a security conference would logically lead to serious reduction of tension and even to the dissolution of NATO (as well as the Warsaw Pact)."

Czechoslovakia

Rude Pravo on 2 December presented a pessimistic view of the forthcoming NATO Ministerial, declaring that NATO never hesitates to make a volte face as regards arguments concerning the conference idea. The article claimed NATO wishes to use delaying tactics to forestall a conference and thus play the game of "...revanchist circles in West Germany which are most of all afraid of such a conference." However, despite the unrealistic and negative stand taken heretofore by NATO toward the Warsaw Pact's proposals, the paper felt that "...the desire of people for certainty, peace and cooperation will lead European Governments to a conference table." On 8 December the paper reproduced briefly the main points of the Communiqué and Declaration, commenting that:

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(1) NATO Ministers stuck to their earlier positions on the question of convoking a conference, and

(2) the Declaration contains no "concrete formulation" in respect of the renunciation of the use of force.

The Bratislava Pravda on the same day interpreted NATO's reply as a virtual "no", going on to note that the attitude of the United States was cautious because Washington "fears that it may not have control of its West European allies at the conference ... (and) even fears bilateral contacts of West European countries with socialist countries." Brussels confirmed the sceptical view that the United States is not interested in participating in a conference and probably does not wish to see such a conference held at all.

On 10 December Mlada Fronta described the reply as "fairly hazy" although "not entirely negative". The article commented that some NATO Governments are trying to block prospects for a conference by putting forward proposals which would be difficult to implement at present, "for example, bilateral balanced reductions in conventional armaments."

East Germany

The East German Radio on 4 December noted that the West German news agency DPA reported Foreign Ministers Harmel and Scheel as having expressed scepticism over the wisdom of holding a security conference within the first six months of 1970. The commentator observed that the Western leaders could not openly oppose a conference, as they might have done in past years, since it now has the support of European peoples. Instead, NATO resorted to false calls for careful preparation, wherein "...a good cause can be talked to death..." The speaker reported that today even NATO cannot simply say "no" because the Budapest Appeal has support on both sides of the dividing line between socialism and capitalism in Europe.

Hungary

The Budapest trade union paper Nepszava on 6 December declared that the Moscow Summit stand "gave fresh impetus to the forces struggling for peace and security in Europe" whereas at NATO "voices could be heard which put a question mark on historical realities". The Magyar Hirlap on that date noted that "several NATO countries want to avoid

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the fundamental approach to the problems of Europe and the world by playing for time." Talks at Moscow, on the other hand, "represented a positive contribution to securing peace in the world, to the creation of European security."

Radio Budapest on the same day reported that NATO was compelled to comment in some manner on the idea of a conference and respond to the several appeals. It said that "... above all the Americans and the British have been trying to prolong the so-called preparatory period since it is now politically impossible to openly reject the idea of a conference." The ministers, it concluded, were at a loss on how to draft the reply which was, in essence, "yes", but "...", which "at the moment and for the time being means 'no'".

The party paper, Nepszabadsag, on 7 December gave what was described as a detailed analysis of the NATO meeting, noting that "no serious agreement was reached at that session". The article credited the Moscow statement of 4 December with helping those NATO members who "try realistically to measure the situation in Europe" while simultaneously preventing the opponents, "primarily the Anglo-Saxon powers", from ignoring the appeal entirely.

The Magyar Nemzet of the People's Patriotic Front on the 7th expressed sorrow that NATO did not accept the proposal for a conference, stating that failure caused bitter disillusionment in world public opinion.

Poland

The Polish press generally accused the United States of pressuring its NATO allies to delay holding a European security conference as advocated by the Warsaw Pact. Trybuna Ludu on 6 December claimed that NATO had been compelled to tackle the subject of a security conference because it could not reject the idea out of hand, but worked to postpone the time of its convocation. The paper's reported commented that "the door to further talks has not been closed, but it would be a mistake to entertain illusions that further efforts to convene a conference will be easy."

The trade union paper, Glos Pracy, on 8 December said the desire for closer relations with communist countries was too strong for the U.S. to block indefinitely. Nevertheless, signs indicate that convoking a conference will be a long and difficult matter. The left-wing so-called Roman Catholic paper, Slowo Powszechnie, also on the 8th,

reported that the negative U.S. stand met with disapproval by those NATO member countries which prefer a more open approach toward the conference idea. This difference reveals a divergence of opinion as well as the dominating pressure exerted by the U.S. on its allies. The Peasant Party paper, Dziennik Ludowy, expressed disappointment at NATO's "lack of determination in meeting half-way the good will manifested on this side of Europe." NATO's emphasis on bilateral and multi-lateral preparatory talks, along with a lack of concrete reaction, led the paper to suspect that NATO members intend to play for time indefinitely.

Rumania

The Romania Libera on 6 December carried a commentary by its Brussels correspondent, which Radio Bucharest also broadcast that same day, which emphasised the difficulty the Ministers experienced in completing the Communiqué due to the existence of two differing views on how NATO should respond to the security conference call. Secretary Rogers was credited with being the hardliner who opposed any clear and positive response. The commentator found some hope for the future in that "the pressure of public opinion favouring concrete actions toward détente will limit the obstructive tactics of the hard-line opponents of a security conference."

Scinteia on 11 December reported approvingly on the initiatives of the Warsaw Pact and said NATO had been obliged to respond to them, even though "... NATO was created and exists for quite other reasons than the promotion of détente and peace in Europe". The article implied that there was a division of opinion between the constructive and realistic attitudes of Belgium, France, Germany and Italy on the one hand and the Secretary General and Mr. Rogers on the other, the latter insisting that the present time is inappropriate for a conference. The article observed that there are increasing positive tendencies in Western Europe working toward détente, but that the recent Ministerial meeting showed that NATO, by its nature, is not the right instrument for discussions seeking détente and an improvement in Europe's political climate. The article concluded by observing that negotiations should not be between blocs, since such acts would exclude nations not members of them.

Yugoslavia

Radio Belgrade reported on a 7 December press despatch from Washington which said Secretary Rogers' "sharp statement" did not provoke surprise in Washington, where it was already familiar. For the rest, the commentary gave a resumé of stories filed by American correspondents who covered the Brussels meeting. On the 9th, Politika recalled

that the conference idea was a Warsaw Pact proposal and observed that "whether the conference will take place depends on the answer of the other, Western, military group, NATO." Despite the continued existence of mutual distrust, the paper felt it was encouraging that "processes for determining general European interests exist, despite the cramped and obsolete bloc limitations."

A Foreign Ministry spokesman at a press conference on the 11th limited his response regarding the Moscow and NATO meetings to a restatement of his government's view that "a conference on European cooperation and security could play a useful rôle in creating stable and secure relationships in Europe." The trade union paper, Rad, on the 11th concluded that, while the two meetings revealed differences in attitude and approach toward the security conference theme, they both showed a similarity in their inclination to view inter-European relations and cooperation as subjects which primarily concern the two blocs. This view, the paper said, suggests that the two blocs believe "they can change the physiognomy of the presently-divided Europe by mutual agreement." The paper concluded on the optimistic note that, despite this point, current interest in European security matters indicates the broad, deep desires for change and the removal of the cause of tensions between blocs.