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NEUTRALITY AND THIRD-FORCE TENDENCIES IN WESTERN EUROPE

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NEUTRALITY AND THIRD-FORCE TENDENCIES IN WESTERN EUROPE

SUMMARY

Recent events in the Far East, the development of the ECA and MDAP programs, and various other factors, have brought into focus the position of West European governments toward contributing to West European defense. A wide variety of minority groups, however, in Western Europe (the NATO countries plus Western Germany) espouse the concepts of (a) neutrality, which involves outright dissociation from the East-West conflict and non-participation in any war unless directly attacked; or of (b) Third-Force, which looks to the restoration of European independence in order to exert influence in the East-West conflict and reduce the preponderance of the US in European affairs. The exact strength or degree of importance of neutralist sentiment is difficult to measure because it is diffused throughout the populations and stems largely from war-weariness, defeatism, fear of the USSR, and distrust of the constancy of US policy and support. The Third-Force concept, on the other hand, has received more explicit formulation and has been espoused by influential groups and individuals within certain West European government and official circles.

Neutralist sentiment is likely to remain strong, and will increase if there is serious economic dislocation in Western Europe and if the military position of the US, especially in the Far East, is weakened. The governments of Western Europe will tend to respond to popular demands for an independent (but not neutral) policy as their needs for US economic and military support decrease. Neither the growth of neutrality nor of Third-Force sentiment will, however, outweigh the factors that induce West European governments to support the achievement of US objectives in Western Europe during 1950–53.

Note: The intelligence organizations of the Departments of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force have concurred in this report; for a dissent of the Intelligence Organization of the Department of State, see Enclosure. This report contains information available to CIA as of 13 November 1950.

NEUTRALITY AND THIRD-FORCE TENDENCIES IN WESTERN EUROPE

1. Definition of the Problem.

In the East-West conflict, it is important to determine the extent to which the countries of Western Europe are likely, during the approximate period 1950-53, to pursue policies independent of those of the US and the USSR in order to dissociate themselves from the East-West struggle, and to estimate the effects of this on US security. The security program of the US is based to a substantial degree upon the assistance of a concerted Western European defense effort. At the present time, this assistance is sought by the US through military, political, and economic agreements for joint action in a strengthened defense. West European acceptance and implementation of these agreements will, therefore, affect the progress of the US defense program.

In weighing the threat to such adherence which is posed by West European desires for a neutral position, or at least a position of more independence from the US, it is necessary to eliminate prevailing confusion by defining the two different concepts of (a) neutrality and (b) Third-Force, and by according them separate treatment. The neutrality concept involves outright dissociation from the East-West conflict and aloofness from the diplomatic quarrels and issues which divide the two great powers. A majority of the neutralists would favor resistance only if their countries were directly attacked. "Third-Force" or "independence" sentiment, as it applies to the West European countries, favors their freedom of action, so far as is possible, from US policies, and often reflects apprehension of US encroachment on European interests. Its adherents maintain that these countries, while not standing aloof from the East-West conflict or lessening their determination to oppose Soviet aggression, should nevertheless pursue national or regional policies even though they may conflict with US objectives, or should perhaps become a link between the conflicting US and Soviet points of view.

2. The Neutralist Position.

a. Summary.

Neutralist sentiment in Western Europe has many variations, ranging from the sincere views of individuals advocating armed neutrality along Swiss and Swedish lines to the attitudes of Communists who exploit the neutralist line to their own advantage. It is impossible to measure the influence of this vague and unorganized popular sentiment. The influence of the Third-Force concept, also difficult to assess, is largely espoused by governmental circles rather than by popular groups in Western Europe.

b. Composition and Strength of Support.

Articulate support of neutrality is found in a wide variety of groups in Western Germany, France, Italy, and Denmark. There is little or no overt neutrality in Great Britain, Norway, or the Benelux countries. In Western Germany, the leading champions of neutrality are groups of former diplomats, militarists, intellectuals, and representatives of special interests. In France, neutralist sentiment is represented by such divergent elements as left-wing intellectuals like Jean-Paul Sartre and Claude Bourdet, whose periodical, L'Observateur, is the chief vehicle of anti-American neutrality in Western Europe, and such outstanding fellow-travelers as Pierre Cot. The anti-US policy sometimes followed by Le Monde, one of the most influential of the independent Paris dailies, represents a mixed class of readers, both conservative businessmen and intellectual liberals. Organized political parties in Italy which have come out for neutrality include the pro-Communist Nenni Socialists, as well as the conservative neo-Fascist Italian Social Movement, the Monarchists, and the remnants of the Uomo Qualunque movement. In Denmark, Social Democratic leaders have often expressed their regret that a neutral Scandinavian alliance did not materialize, and minor elements within the party, as well as the Radical Liberals, generally still harbor neutralist feeling.

In Germany, opposition to remilitarization can in part be ascribed to neutralist sentiment, arising mainly out of war-weariness and the wish not to be involved in an East-West war. The relative lack of influence of the neutrality groups and their failure to find sympathy in the governments of the NATO nations should not obscure the fact that their ideas have some basis in the thinking of the masses of the people, who support that policy which offers to them the greatest assurance of peace and security.

c. Factors Contributing to Neutralist Sentiment.

The various factors contributing to neutralist sentiment in the NATO countries are psychological as well as political, economic, and military. There are, in addition, many factors peculiar to the individual countries.

Political. Western European neutrality sentiment stems from a conviction that the East-West conflict is primarily between two rival imperialist powers, the US and the USSR, and should not be permitted to spread to the West European nations. Another argument is that the Soviet Union does not want a war, but requires peace for its proper economic and social development. In addition, the neutralists have seized upon the recent shift of international activity to the Far East to warn against West European involvement in that area. Finally, these groups attempt to minimize the extent of interests common to the US and to the West European nations and the ideological ties that exist between the two areas.

Economic. West European neutralists deplore the maintenance of the US-West European alignment in its present form as confirming the economic as well as the political division of the European continent and its permanent economic subordination to the US. They further stress the dangers of West European attachment to what they consider a powerful and privileged economy, and emphasize that withdrawal from the East-West conflict and assumption of a neutral position would facilitate the resumption of East-West trade, restore the balance in the European economy, and relieve Marshall Plan countries

of much of their dependence on the dollar area.

Military. The military reasons for neutralist sentiment in the NATO countries stem from: (1) the assumption that the Western European countries, particularly under the current NATO arrangements, could not be successfully defended in the face of possible attack by Soviet forces in overwhelming numbers; (2) the belief that atomic attack, inevitable in such a war because the USSR now possesses an atomic capability, would mean the complete destruction of Western Europe; and (3) inability of West European governments to make adequate preparations for the defense of Western Europe against Soviet attack.

Because of the strong feeling that Western Europe cannot be defended, in view of the lack of any military force capable of resisting Soviet ground and air forces, West Europeans can derive little comfort from the thought of Allied naval superiority and strategic air strength in relation to possibilities of Soviet attack.

Psychological. Much of the neutralist psychology, especially in France and Italy, arises from war-weariness and defeatism growing out of World War II. Many of the French, for example, are inclined to question the efficacy of any military struggle since, in their view, there is little distinction between the effects of victory and defeat. French and Germans alike dread the thought of having their homelands once again become battle-grounds, particularly in a war waged with atomic bombs.

Communist Influence. In their struggle against the maintenance of the US-Western Europe alignment, the Communist parties of Western Europe, through their anti-Marshall Plan propaganda, their campaigns against the MDAP, and especially their "peace movement," have exploited genuine neutralist sentiment in Western Europe. The peace campaign, built around the Stockholm appeal, has had some success in winning support from non-Communist elements, particularly in France and Italy, and to a lesser degree in spreading the notion that the USSR is essentially dedicated to peace.

Local Factors. In addition to these overall factors, there are local problems which contribute to the existence of neutralist sentiment in the NATO countries. In France and Italy, where national Communist parties are powerful politically and dominate the trade unions, the neutralists argue that neutrality is the sole means of achieving internal unity supported by all political groups. In Italy the restrictive features of the peace treaty have contributed to neutralist sentiment, while in Western Germany neutrality is sometimes advanced as the sole means of securing the unity of East and West Germany. This latter view is also espoused by elements in the Evangelical Church, including Pastor Niemoeller, and has also played a part in the tensions in the West German Cabinet. In Denmark, and to some degree in Norway, the profound feeling for Scandinavian unity is a factor in promoting neutrality sentiment.

3. Third-Force Thinking.

Third-Force thinking in West European countries differs from the neutrality concept in that it does not reject participation in the East-West conflict, but rather demands participation on terms of equality. The Third Force envisages independent policy formulation for each country, or for Western Europe as a whole. Thus it rejects a completely neutral attitude, but encourages policies independent of and sometimes in direct opposition to those of the US. It is based largely on the pursuit of national or regional interests which do not always conform to those of the US, and on a general concern over US predominance. It consists of a desire to regain West European freedom of action in world affairs by creating in Western Europe conditions for exerting considerable influence in the East-West conflict, or at least of adopting an independent foreign affairs role. An example is the UK's more or less consistent policy of remaining aloof from current schemes for European integration. In addition, West German Chancellor Adenauer has called for the creation of a powerful united Western Europe (including Western Germany) which could develop into a Third Force in the East-West conflict, or as a "counterweight in favor of peace." In

the eyes of its various advocates, the Third-Force concept may vary from a distinctly pro-Western orientation (Adenauer's version) to a position permitting close trade relations and more cooperation with the East. Under extreme nationalist leaders, in Western Germany in particular, the latter position would represent a serious obstacle to US foreign policy.

The more important implications of these tendencies toward independence of US policies, however, lie in the various schemes of West European integration. Emphasis has changed somewhat from the Third Force as an organization which would stand between the US and the USSR and act as a mediator to the more recent version, supported by continental European Socialists in particular. which conceives of the Third Force as a continental grouping firmly integrated into the Atlantic community and capable of wielding an influence comparable to that of the US and the UK. Effective development of the Schuman Plan establishing a coal-steel pool for a single market in Western Europe would create a powerful economic and political basis for such a movement. Under such circumstances, the Third Force might become a continental combination capable of exploiting the East-West conflict, rather than supporting, in every instance, the policies of the US.

The national concepts of independent action, which have found support in the UK and in the Scandinavian members of the NATO. and the Third-Force principles held in other continental countries included in the NATO. are favored by the following factors: (1) the traditional national and European independence of action that has survived the defeatism of war; (2) the obvious differences in economic, cultural, and material interests which distinguish Europe from the US; (3) the progress toward West European economic recovery which has lessened, even if it has not closed, the gap between European and US economic power; and (4) the growing belief, supported by the shift in the military developments in the Far East, that the US has increasing need of the political, economic, and military alliance of the European powers.

4. Probable Future Development of Neutrality and Third-Force Sentiment.

a. Political Factors.

The intensification of the East-West conflict marked by a deteriorating East Asian situation is likely to have considerable bearing on the development of West European neutrality or Third-Force sentiment in the period 1950-53. The fact of open conflict between the US and a Soviet satellite, with the attendant strains on world peace mechanisms, has heightened Buropean alarm and desire to escape involvement in a third world war. Increasing involvement of the US in the Far East will increase European fears of US inability to defend West Europe against Soviet aggression. Sentiment for independent action on the part of the West European countries may on the contrary increase. As their individual and collective military capabilities gain a greater degree of economic stability, they will seek to adopt policies more independent of the US.

b. Economic Factors.

The rearmament program will call for a substantial economic contribution. Diversion of any considerable portion of the West European productive capacity to defense objectives will place a heavy burden upon the economy. The amount of such diversion is not certain because, except in Germany, there remains a considerable military industrial capacity presently unused. Sacrifices will also be demanded of the people in the form of higher taxes and lower living standards, and West Europeans will be very reluctant to make such sacrifices as long as a substantial number of them can be persuaded to hope that it is still possible to stay out of a war between the US and the USSR, or until it is generally accepted that the military establishment thus created will guarantee their security.

Rearmament is also likely to generate a serious inflation unless the West European governments are prepared to restore or exert more drastic controls over prices and allocation and distribution of materials than is at present the case. Prices have already begun to rise sharply in many Western European nations, partly as a result of the disturbance in Korea. Serious labor trouble is in prospect as the workers demand wage increases to meet

the advancing costs of living. If granted, the increases will accelerate the wage-price inflationary spiral unless at the same time productivity is raised substantially; if not granted. widespread strikes are likely to cripple the rearmament effort. The net effect of such developments will be to stimulate neutrality or Third-Force sentiment, especially among the industrial workers and the middle-income groups, who are strongly opposed to losing the precarious gains achieved under postwar reconstruction programs, and who are already doubtful of the possibility or wisdom of trying to strengthen Western Europe militarily to resist the Soviet threat. Such sentiment will be actively encouraged and exploited by Soviet propaganda designed to frighten Western Europeans away from participation in alleged US plans for an attack on the USSR.

The economic cost to Western Europe of an adequate rearmament program will raise strong opposition in many circles not yet in sympathy with neutrality or Third-Force groups. US willingness to help finance the program or provide the equipment will tend to counteract this opposition, but a demand for extensive European self-help will increase popular resistance to the pursuit of US objectives and will diminish the willingness of the governments to make commitments within the program. Neutrality sentiment can be expected to flourish and make converts in any period of economic hardship induced by largescale preparations for defense in Western Europe, and US defense efforts will be successful only in proportion to the degree of economic stability maintained in Western Europe over the next few years.

c. Military Factors.

A considerable amount of neutrality and Third-Force sentiment will probably develop unless decisive preparations are made at once to defend Western Europe against possible Soviet aggression. The recent US announcement of its willingness to despatch additional troops to Western Europe will be effective in reducing such sentiment only if reinforcement is undertaken on a scale sufficient to convince West Europeans that there is some chance of repelling a Soviet attack across the Elbe. Neutralist thinking will be intensified

by any further talk in the US about a "preventive war," which will tend to frighten West Europeans. NATO military superiority rests not so much on ground or naval forces in being, as upon the implied threat of strategic air forces in being with their capability of atomic bombing of Soviet cities. Despite their appreciation of the Western air power potential, West Europeans are more likely to be influenced by ground forces in being. Thus the physical threat of Red Army divisions, coupled with the insufficiency of Allied ground forces in Europe to oppose them, is likely to be a considerable force in promoting neutralist sentiment.

5. Probable Developments in Rearmament.

During the period 1950-53, the West European governments will be under constant US pressure to supplement US military contributions to the defense of Western Europe. At the same time, these governments are likely to keep their contributions to a minimum. The UK, the only West European country immediately capable of contributing heavily, along with US forces, to West European defense, will probably continue to proceed as cautiously as possible. The French also will be slow to increase their participation, especially in view of their commitments in the Far East. Italian contributions will be limited by Peace Treaty restrictions and by a weak will to resist, and West German contributions are likely to be delayed by Allied conflicts of interest. The contributions by the Benelux countries will be negligible.

In the strengthening of the naval forces of the NATO countries, the US and the UK will have to provide, during the period under consideration, the necessary leadership and support. Upon the other countries, therefore, will devolve a clearly subsidiary role. This factor will further reduce the opportunity for a neutral or independence policy for these nations. At the same time, West Europeans are likely to derive little comfort from Allied naval superiority, because of the feeling that naval forces will not play the decisive role in a future European war.

Neutrality and Third-Force Versus Rearmament.

Although West European neutrality and Third-Force sentiment warrants realistic appraisal and corrective propaganda, it is unlikely to offer a major impediment to the achievement of US objectives. This will tend to be the case, even though a popular preference for neutrality is likely to remain strong and although the governments of Western Europe will probably seek a greater independence in their national policies to the extent that their dependence upon US military and economic support declines. During the period 1950-53 the decisions of the West European governments will continue to be swayed by the necessity of this support, despite popular pressures to the contrary. This general conclusion is supported by a variety of considerations (discussed below).

a. Political Factors.

The NATO governments will, partly as a result of the Korean war, probably become much more involved in the NATO defense and rearmament activity, to a point where it will be exceedingly difficult for them to adopt a neutral or independent policy. Although few West European governments share fully the US views of the immediacy and extent of the Soviet threat, they will agree to cooperate with the US in defense measures, though this cooperation is likely to be increasingly cautious. As previously observed, neutralist sentiment, so far as it is politically organized, is relatively uninfluential and lacks the capability to dictate the decisions of the NATO governments. It should be recalled, moreover, that most West European neutralists are not opposed to rearmament per se, nor are they generally opposed to the US or to the continued receipt of US economic aid. The current development of some Third-Force thinking seems to be in the direction of a continental group firmly integrated into the Atlantic community, though not necessarily committed to all the policies of the US. While the Korean situation may raise doubts concerning the possibility of achieving a satisfactory solution, it will not affect West European active support of US-sponsored plans.

b. Economic Factors.

According to present plans, West European nations will receive considerably less economic aid from the US during the period 1950-53 as a result of the termination of ECA. Although ECA assistance has accomplished much in rehabilitating the war-shattered economy of Western Europe and restoring a large measure of prosperity to the people and stability to the governments, it has not enabled the West European nations to reach a point at which freedom from US economic influence will be possible in the foreseeable future, nor has it made substantial improvements in the social structure. Neither will it be possible for any of these nations to pursue a truly independent economic policy as long as there is continued dependence on US assistance in the matter of common defense against the threat of Soviet aggression. Once committed to a long-range rearmament program, the implementation of which will require US leadership and coordination, the European nations

will continue to be subject to US policy decisions in the economic field.

c. Military Factors.

For the military defense of their area, the West European countries will remain during the period 1950-53 largely dependent on US support, particularly in the field of strategic air power and atomic warfare. For this reason, they will be unable to attain an independent bargaining position that could seriously threaten US efforts in Western Europe to contain Soviet aggression. Although fear of military developments or lack of progress toward an adequate defensive position may encourage neutrality sentiment among the peoples of Western Europe, it is unlikely by 1953 to influence their governments to a point where the achievement of US objectives would be seriously hampered. Limitations on the scope of West European rearmament are probable, though not all of these limitations will stem from neutralist sentiment in the nations involved.

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ENCLOSURE

DISSENT OF THE INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The Intelligence Organization of the Department of State concurs in the major conclusions of subject report. We disagree, however, with certain specific statements because they are either incorrect, or so imprecisely dated as to permit a wholly unsupportable interpretation. Specifically, the following points are objected to:

- 1. Further military involvement of the United States in the Far East may encourage neutralist and Third Force sentiment in Europe, but if, as the paper states, the "military position of the US, especially in the Far East, is weakened" this could have the opposite effect by making possible more military attention to Europe.
- 2. The discussion of the relation of rising prices to labor unrest is too rigid and poses

what would appear to be equally dangerous alternatives. We admit that the impact of rearmament on living standards very likely will stimulate some labor unrest, but the existing governments are sufficiently strong and flexible to prevent this from developing into "widespread strikes" which "are likely to cripple the rearmament effort."

3. In view of Italy's present economic and financial resources, and considering the cost of modern armament, we cannot agree that the Peace Treaty is a major hindrance under present conditions to the Italian defense effort.

The paper also fails to balance the effect of neutralist thinking on the defense effort of Western Europe with a reference to the counterweight provided by the strength and growth of the forces in favor of rearmament.

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