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The Western Alliance and NATO's Dual-Track Decision (December 14, 1979)

This article in the conservative daily *Die Welt* defends NATO's Dual-Track Decision, emphasizing America's important role as the leader of the Western world and underscoring the solidarity of the Western Alliance, which had been put to a difficult test.

The Sign from Brussels

NATO managed to push through its decision by the skin of its teeth. The solidarity of the alliance has thus been maintained outwardly to some extent, though there are cracks from within that had to be covered over by an arduous finessing of words. That should encourage the enemy that he might still be able to achieve the nuclear fissure of the alliance through a drumfire of propaganda. So it is now a matter of waiting to see whether, and how, the first step into the gray zone – which was nothing more than the approval of the program – will be followed in 3-4 years by the second, which will enable its implementation. But after [U.S. President Jimmy] Carter sent the signal, that very same day in Washington, that he was willing to lead, one need not watch the developments without optimism.

To be sure, the Soviet Union has enough Trojan donkeys that can be put to use in its interests, and not only in Belgium or especially in the Netherlands – where the NATO resolution was accepted only with all kinds of “ifs” and “buts” – but throughout much of the western camp. The governments of the alliance need strength and wisdom to resist the storms that still endanger the course of their security policies.

[Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich] Genscher put it in very hopeful terms: “Now the Soviet Union can no longer influence our decision.” But it will try, because knowledge of how excessively the Soviets have built up arms is by no means widespread. On the one hand, German Chancellor [Helmut] Schmidt can be happy that Carter is finally prepared to take on the leadership after Schmidt found numerous occasions to express his regret that leadership was lacking. On the other hand, however, Schmidt has to think about the fact that his own leadership role within the SPD will not be any easier if America adopts a policy that in many ways represents a *de facto* if not verbal departure from its détente strategy up to now.

But what is the reality? According to the Federal Republic's Security White Book, which is based on a cautious estimate, the Soviet Union possesses 1,370 weapons systems of the kind that threaten Europe, but so far only a total of 386 nuclear weapons of the same type that the United States, Britain, and France have deployed in Europe. Meanwhile, however, total numbers only insufficiently establish the relative strength of the weapons, because they reflect neither the

qualitative nor the quantitative changes that would result from the introduction of SS-20 missiles and backfire bombers into the eastern capability.

The efforts of the West to reestablish the balance is thus rather late in coming, but probably still in time. If, starting in 1983, the Americans want to introduce a total of 572 intermediate-range nuclear weapons – namely, 464 Tomahawk Cruise missiles and 108 Pershing II XR ballistic missiles – into the alliance, then, in view of the Soviet arsenal, they are executing a rather modest plan, which also involves the removal of 1,000 nuclear warheads.

If the European members of NATO had withheld their approval, then the American partners in the pact would have been more or less released from all responsibility for deterrence, and the Soviet adversaries would have had a chance to successfully intimidate NATO states. America's nuclear guarantee for Europe presumes that the leading power can deploy nuclear weapons that satisfy the strategy of "flexible response." In an emergency, the community cannot expect that the United States will take giant steps toward escalation, which would lead to a premature total [nuclear] exchange with the Soviet Union in the battle for our continent. In its own interest, this community must insure that its strongest member has developed an ability to escalate in small steps that correspond with the requirements of the strategy. Militarily and politically, its connection to our part of the earth thus becomes broader and deeper, and the credibility of its guarantee of protection will subsequently increase.

This insight comes thanks to energetic planning in London and Bonn; Rome joined in with an encouragingly firm stance. Washington wants to increase its deployment for the security of the West considerably, in order to counter the challenge from the East. Of course, it is making its contribution to the alliance dependent on what the NATO partners do to defy nuclear and conventional pressure from Moscow. Will the allies comply with the package deal and increase their respective military budgets; will it not come to pass that the effective three-percent increase is relativized after the fact, as happened once before in the German budget? All in all, U.S. Secretary of State [Cyrus] Vance does not seem to have left the NATO meeting with a bad impression. He let it be understood that one could deal with Holland going its own way, and he seemed to regard Belgium's qualified approval also as a "oui," as did the Belgian press the next day.

President Carter's speech demonstrates that words are being backed by deeds. The Soviet arms build-up under the sign of "détente" convinced him. His program provides for an annual increase in the military budget of a real 4.5 percent for five years. As a result, a different wind is blowing from Washington. NATO should understand the signs of the times, prove its solidarity, and seal the cracks in the ranks of the allies as soon as possible. The Soviets have ways to have influence, but America has them too, thank God – to an incomparably greater extent.

Source: Wolfram von Raven, "Das Zeichen von Brüssel" ["The Sign from Brussels"], *Die Welt*, December 14, 1979.

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