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The Washi

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Americans in Europe

No one with a respect for reality would contend that a fixed specific number of American troops in Europe was necessary indefinitely in order to deter Communist aggression. In that sense it probably would not be catastrophic if the Administration were to follow the advice of the Senate Democratic Policy Committee and bring about a "substantial reduction" in the size of American forces. This would in no way constitute an abandonment of Europe. Nevertheless, both in method and in timing, the effect of the Democratic resolution could be extremely damaging.

The most immediate effect will of course be felt in Germany. Coming on top of the withdrawal of French troops from NATO (although two rudimentary divisions remain in Germany) and the likelihood that a British division will be pulled back, the removal of one or more of the six American divisions would emphasize dramatically that Germany is much more on her own.

This would not necessarily be all bad. It is time that the Germans faced more of the facts of international life—and, indeed, they have begun to do so with a more flexible diplomacy. But the catapulting of Germany again into the ranks of major military powers already has had some unfortunate side effects, as in the technological lag evident in the Starfighter crisis. Perhaps the Germans would prefer a reduction in the number of American troops to more Pentagon pressure to meet support costs or to buy American weapons they do not really need so as to help this country's balance of payments. Even so, the prospect of troop withdrawals could only further undermine the already shaky political position of Chancellor Erhard on the eve of his visit to Washington.

Beyond this, there is the influence of such a unilateral move upon NATO and Western strategy. The United States has pressed its allies to do more for the common defense, and undoubtedly they could afford to do so. It has been embarrassed by criticisms that Washington officials tend to act unilaterally instead of consulting with the alliance. Yet here is a completely unilateral proposal, made with no attempt to consult the Allies on how it would affect them. More than this, the inevitable effect of sizable withdrawals would be to sink an additional spike into Secretary McNamara's

"pause" doctrine—whereby enough troops would be available with conventional weapons to delay an enemy and permit a deliberate decision on whether to employ nuclear weapons. A prompt resort to nuclear weapons would become more likely.

It is quite true that the international climate has changed since the tense days of 1951 when a Senate resolution urged the stationing of six American divisions in Europe. But the lessening of tensions, strictly speaking, arises from a re-interpretation of Soviet intentions, not from a diminution of Soviet capabilities. There has been no reported reduction in the 20 Soviet divisions stationed in East Germany, let alone those in Poland and Hungary. Why, if we are to contemplate a troop reduction, did we not make it a matter for negotiation with Moscow so as to obtain a possible *quid pro quo* instead of throwing away a bargaining card?

Finally, there is the matter of the psychological effect of a unilateral withdrawal upon Western Europe. This area is now subjected to currents of isolationism and given to doubts about American policy in Vietnam. If it is true that the United States cannot ignore its interests in Asia because of Europe, the opposite is equally true. What this sort of legislative pressure may do is persuade many Europeans that their suspicions are justified—that isolationism is returning to America and that the United States does not have the will to stay the course. If there is to be a troop reduction, surely this ought to be a deliberate decision of NATO policy. And if a troop reduction is to have a constructive effect upon abating the cold war and promoting a European settlement, surely it ought to come after, not before, serious talks with the Soviet Union.